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Henry Wallace

by Dwight Macdonald

Thou wouldst be great,
Are not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
That thou wouldst holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it',
And that which rather thou dost fear to do
Than wishest should be undone.

—MACBETH, *Act 1, Scene 5.*

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.

—*Same, Scene 7.*

HENRY Agard Wallace is an ardent tennis-player. His form is said to be atrocious—it is rumored that he uses two hands on backhand shots—but he makes up for awkwardness by energy, trying for everything and wearing his opponent down by sheer persistence. It is probably a canard that he once confessed to humanitarian compunctions about hitting the ball too hard. But the story is authentic that, after a hard-fought set, Wallace remarked to his defeated opponent: "I suppose it's not very Christian of me, but I *do* like to win."* The scruples, the clumsiness, the persistence, and the ambition are all characteristic of one of the most complex personalities in public life.

In other things beside tennis, Henry Wallace also likes to win. His old associate, Rexford Tugwell, once exclaimed, with a note of awe: "My God, that man's ambitious!" Since Tugwell himself was not precisely lacking in that quality, the tribute is all the more impressive. Henry Wallace has come far since the day in 1932 that Roosevelt plucked him from

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* These are his words as recalled by the opponent, one of Wallace's old associates. Throughout this article, references to printed sources are given either in the text or in the numbered "References" at the end. When material is not so identified, it is either because it seemed unnecessary (matters of common knowledge, newspaper reports in which the date is given, etc.) or else because, as here, it was obtained by interviews with persons having first-hand knowledge of the events.

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obscurity to make him his Secretary of Agriculture. The seven years in Agriculture, which made him a national figure as planner, prophet and pamphleteer, were followed by the Vice-Presidency (1940-1944), a post in which his passionate rhetoric made him the Woodrow Wilson of World War II. The climax came at the Democratic 1944 convention, where Wallace—playing, as it turned out, for the highest stakes of all: the Presidency itself—was narrowly defeated by Truman for the vice-presidential nomination. There followed two rather blank years as Secretary of Commerce; then last fall his forced resignation from the cabinet as the result of his Madison Square Garden speech; and now the editorship of *The New Republic,* a position that affords more scope for vanity than for ambition.

The end-result, to an ambitious man like Wallace, must be disappointing. At the present writing, Wallace commands about as much "grass-roots" following among the nation's farmers as Bruce Bliven. His wartime rhetoric, perhaps fortunately for him, is now forgotten. His overtures to the business community while Secretary of Commerce produced no discernible effects. The labor movement seems to have cooled towards him: two years ago, he was a keynote speaker at the CIO convention, but last fall he was not invited, his place being filled by General Eisenhower. Even the liberals appear to be deserting him: the Progressive Citizens of America, organized around Wallace last fall, depends mostly on Hollywood for "names", while the bulk of more substantial liberal leaders—Eleanor Roosevelt, Ickes, Henderson, Bowles, Wyatt, to name a few—support the rival Americans for Democratic Action. The reason for the liberals' defection from the man they considered their national leader a short year ago is, of course, Wallace's pro-Russian stand in foreign policy and his involvement with the Communists in domestic politics. This issue alone divides ADA from PCA; the former bars Communists from membership, the latter does not; the former is critical of Soviet policy, the latter is not—as in the recent full-page newspaper ad, signed by Wallace, which made many justified criticisms of Truman's proposed Greek-Turkish loan but contained not a sentence about the Russian expansionist policy to which the loan is a reaction. The "Russian turn" Wallace has executed in the last few years is also the reason the CIO top leadership has lost its enthusiasm for him.

It would seem, in short, as though Wallace had gotten himself into a political dead-end. As the antagonism between American and Russian imperialism increases—if, indeed, it can grow any sharper than it is now—the retreat from Moscow now going on in liberal-labor circles will become ever more precipitate. Yet Wallace is committed to a pro-Russian policy; he will squirm, he will evade and compromise, but it is hard to see how even his genius for obfuscation can extricate him.

Once more, he may say with Macbeth:

> *They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,*
> *But bear-like I must fight the course.*

This is a sad conclusion to a career which not so long ago seemed full of promise. Especially since the Russian Turn appeared to be so promising a political move when Wallace first embraced it during the war. The present interest of Wallace's career and personality lies in what it reveals about the nature of that movement, now also somewhat faded, known as the New Deal, and about the nature of the American liberal-labor movement which for years looked to Henry Wallace as its No. 1 political leader.

1. The Wallace Myth

THERE is perhaps no public figure whom both his admirers and his enemies understand so little as Henry Wallace. This is because he is a split personality, an extraordinary combination of idealism and opportunism, moral fervor and *realpolitik,* bold challenge and timid evasion, and of any one of a dozen other antimonies which exist side by side within his personality. If one looks at Henry Wallace from the standpoint of what he says, one sees him as compounded of the first parts of the above contradictions: principled, sincere, morally courageous, etc. But if one looks at what he does (and also examines the obligatto, so to speak, of contradictory substatements that always accompany any major statement) then one sees him as compact of the second parts. Americans have been conditioned to think of words as acts—by advertising, by the demagogy of "left" and "right" alike, by the impossibility of getting behind a politician's words, in this large-scale society, without more trouble than most people can or will take. Hence it has been Wallace's words that both friends and enemies have paid most attention to, with confusing results.*

What is the Wallace Myth? As we follow his career, we shall examine it in detail. Here let us attempt a summary confrontation of image and reality.

FICTION #1: That Wallace is a man of notable integrity.

FACT: Even on the modest scale required of politicians, he rates low. For example:

(a) In addressing the Congress of American-Soviet Friendship on November 8, 1942, Wallace quoted De Tocqueville as follows: "There are at the present time two great nations of the world which seem to tend toward the same end, although they start from different points. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. [The one has for its principal means of action Liberty; the other, Servitude.] Their starting point is different and their course is not the same, yet each of them seems to be marked by the will of heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe." The sentence in brackets was omitted by Wallace.

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* I have tried to read everything of significance by and about Wallace that has appeared in print. It is remarkable how even writers who have no political sympathy with Wallace have taken him at his own valuation. The first thoroughly hostile article about Wallace appeared only lately: Frank Kent's *The Wallace Legend,* Saturday Evening Post, Dec. 7, 1946.

To Our Readers

Beginning with this issue, POLITICS will be published every other month instead of monthly. Each issue will normally be 48 pages, instead of 32 as hitherto. Present subscriptions will be extended in the proportion of one of the new bi-monthly issues for each one and a half of the old issues due.

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(b) The split in the liberal ranks last fall was a source of great anxiety to Wallace, since almost all the "big names" went into the ADA (which bars Communists from membership), leaving him isolated as leader of the PCA. On January 27, 1947, he wrote in *The New Republic:* "The point I want to make is that the liberals today in the so-called warring groups are about 90% in agreement. Some people who have read about 'Mrs. Roosevelt's ADA and Henry Wallace's PCA' have written in, asking, 'How does it happen that Henry Wallace and Mrs. Roosevelt are in warring camps?' The answer is: 'We are not.' I am not a member of the PCA and Mrs. Roosevelt, to the best of my knowledge, is not a member or an officer of the ADA. I spoke to one organization urging unity in the progressive ranks. Mrs. Roosevelt spoke to the other." It is technically true that Wallace is not a member of the PCA, though a larger concept of truth would embrace the facts that he made the keynote speech at PCA's founding convention, that PCA is built around only one man, Henry Wallace, and that he, and he alone, speaks for PCA in full-page newspaper ads. But Mrs. Roosevelt *was* a member of ADA, as Wallace could have found out by a call to her or to ADA, or a perusal of the newspapers. His whole picture of the ADA-PCA split, based on a false statement, was thus misleading. The next day Mrs. Roosevelt publicly reaffirmed her membership in ADA. No correction was made by Wallace nor, so far as I can determine, by *The New Republic.*

(c) On July 23, 1946, while he was still Secretary of Commerce, Wallace wrote a letter to President Truman criticising American policy towards Russia, especially as to the atomic bomb. His main points, which simply repeated the Russian position on the bomb, were that the American proposals for atomic disarmament were unilateral, in that other nations would have to disarm without the USA being in any way committed to do so, that the veto issue was "irrelevant", and that the Russian counter-proposal "in some respects goes even farther than our plan and is in agreement with the basic principles of our plan." The letter was made public by Truman on September 17. Bernard Baruch, author of the American plan, met with Wallace and his aides on September 27 and apparently convinced him that his criticism flowed from ignorance of the American proposals. The conference ended with Wallace's aides drawing up a letter, to be signed by him, admitting that "at the time I wrote my letter to the President, I was not fully posted on some aspects of the position of the United States Representative." When it came to signing the letter, however, Wallace simply vanished for three days (a common habit in crises); finally, he telephoned Baruch that he would agree to sign only an entirely different letter in which, far from conceding ignorance and error, he gave the impression that he had been right, that Baruch had also been right, and that everybody agreed with everybody. Baruch, being a reactionary, resented this doubletalk, broke off negotiations, and made the whole thing public, with texts. Wallace, being a progressive, republished his original letter to Truman, with none of the misstatements corrected, in a pamphlet entitled "The Fight for Peace."

FICTION #2: That Wallace has great moral courage.

FACT: Throughout his career, Wallace has backed down when the opposition was strong, has altered his sentiments to placate his audience, has run away from a fight on principles whenever he could. For example:

(a) As Secretary of Agriculture in 1935, he "purged" the New Dealers when pressure was put on him by big business and the spokesmen for the well-to-do farmers. (See under "The Great Purge" below.)

(b) During the delivery of his Madison Square Garden speech last fall, the fellow-travellers who packed the hall booed at one or two mildly critical remarks about Russian policy. Wallace was visibly upset; for the rest of the speech, he simply omitted, from the typed copy before him, all uncomplimentary references to Russia. Asked why later, he replied: "Because I felt I had been booed enough. I didn't see any particular point in making a riot there."

(c) Businessmen as well as Communists intimidate Wallace. When he addressed the American Business Congress in 1943, he omitted the following sentence, which appeared in the transcript released to the press: "The present high concentration of investment banking in New York is itself incompatible with free enterprise, for only large national corporations have access on reasonable terms to that market." It is perhaps superfluous to note that the Congress was held in New York.[1]

(d) In Wallace's book, *Statesmanship and Religion* (1934), which is based on lectures, there occurs on page 45 a humorous reference to the Anti-Popery of his forefathers. A footnote informs us that when the lectures were syndicated for newspaper publication, Wallace had asked that this passage be dropped, but by mistake it was not. "It is obvious," adds the note, "that the author wishes to emphasize those things which unite humanity rather than those which separate." It might also have added that the lectures were delivered to Protestant groups, while the syndicated articles would have been read by Catholics as well. The author, in general, has always wished to emphasize those things which unite humanity—to him.

(e) In 1935, Wallace was engaged in a sharp controversy with the New England textile manufacturers, who objected to the AAA processing tax on cotton. On April 17, he made a speech in Maine in which he asked, "Where is the rugged individualism I've heard so much about?" and commented on "whining that doesn't do any credit to New England ingenuity" and "the flabbiness of the third and fourth generation." There was a great uproar throughout New England. It was an awkward moment, with a presidential election due next year. So on April 24, Wallace wrote the president of the New England Council repudiating his statements and charging the press with misquotation. If Bryan was the Great Commoner, Wallace is the Great Misquotee. Reporters never seem to get his remarks straight, especially when they turn out to be ill-advised.

FICTION #3: That he is a dreamer, a visionary whose spirit moves in realms far above petty political considerations.

FACT: It is true that Wallace is a clumsy political operator, but this is not because he is too pure for this world but because of a constitutional fuzziness of judgment for which he earnestly tries to compensate by allying himself to extremely "realistic" groups and individuals. Thus while he was Secretary of Agriculture, he worked closely with the powerful (and anti-New Deal) Farm Bureau lobby. As Vice-President and Secretary of Commerce, he selected as his political mentor a conventional ward-politician type, Harold Young (of whom more later). Of late, he has become more and more deeply involved with the Stalinists, as ruthless and realistic a crew as ever rigged an election or weaseled a resolution. That he is not conspicuously successful as a *realpolitiker* is due to lack of talent, not effort.

FICTION #4: That Wallace is rigid, even somewhat doctrinaire, in his ideology.

FACT: He is a man not of principle but of principles—all of them all together all at once. He preaches the economics of abundance and plows under every third row. He prepares for the coming Century of the Common Man by helping plan the atomic bomb. His views on materialistic progress would

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be equally pleasing to Tolstoy and Herbert Spencer, depending on which paragraph each happened to read. He favors State control and planning of economy, but is careful also to praise Free Enterprise. His book, *Sixty Million Jobs* (1945) was generally taken as a manifesto for New Deal planning and spending, but closer inspection shows that it calls for a balanced budget, business tax reductions, no Planned Economy, and little more State spending than most business groups were then recommending. As for Free Enterprise, it turns out to be synonymous with full employment: "The full-employment problem—which, after all, is the preservation of our democratic free enterprise system." But if he is not a fanatical Planner, neither is he a fanatical Free Enterpriser. He believes, in fact, in Eric Johnston's now-forgotten "people's capitalism", that is a system of economic privilege in which *every one is a* member of the elite. As for the class struggle, he wants everybody to win it. "We must find, and find it soon," he declared last June 15, "some effective means of protecting the general welfare—and doing this even as we strengthen instead of weaken, the rights and interests of both management and labor." No, Henry Wallace is not doctrinaire.

FICTION #5: That Wallace has fought the good fight against privilege and injustice.

FACT: One of the most striking things about Wallace's career is how much talking he has done about fighting for the common man, and how little acting. He has occupied posts of great power, but has been chary of putting his words into action. As Secretary of Agriculture, he let Tugwell, Frank and others do the fighting for the "under-privileged." As a top figure in the war economy, he did engage in a strenuous conflict with conservatives like Hull and Jesse Jones, but the issue was the efficient conduct of the war; this seems to have little to do with the interests of the Common Man (though efficiency now seems to be becoming, as in Russia, a criterion of liberalism). As Secretary of Commerce, he made no significant reforms and chose conservative businessmen for his top aides.

AT THIS point, two questions arise: How has the Wallace myth survived so long? What qualities of his have made him so prominent a leader of the liberal-labor movement? The answers are to be found in the realm of language. Wallace has made a career by supplying to the liblabs a commodity they crave: rhetoric which accomplishes in fantasy what cannot be accomplished in reality. His relation to them is comparable to that of Hitler to the German middle classes: a demagogue whose rhetoric to an outside observer appears to be stylistically atrocious and intellectually puerile, but which strikes through to certain deep, confused mass emotions. Fortunately, the liblabs are not so large or significant a class as the middle classes, and Wallace apparently lacks charisma (or political sex-appeal) for a wider American audience. As Roosevelt once remarked: "Henry just hasn't got It."

His Impersonal Idiom: Wallese

Wallaceland is the mental habitat of Henry Wallace plus a few hundred thousand regular readers of *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, and *PM*. It is a region of perpetual fogs, caused by the warm winds of the liberal Gulf Stream coming in contact with the Soviet glacier. Its natives speak "Wallese", a debased provincial dialect.

Wallese is as rigidly formalized as Mandarin Chinese. The Good people are described by ritualistic adjectives: "forward-looking", "freedom-loving", "clear-thinking", and, of course, "democratic" and "progressive." The Bad people are always "reactionaries" or "red-baiters"; there are surprisingly few of them, considering the power they wield, and they are perversely wicked, since their *real* interests would best be served by the Progressive and Realistic policies favored by the Good people. Wallese is always employed to Unite rather than to Divide (hence the fog), and to Further Positive, Constructive Aims rather than Merely to Engage in Irresponsible and Destructive Criticism. As George F. Babbitt of Zenith City, who had his own brand of Wallese in the twenties, used to say: It's Easy Enough to Criticise! There are other conventions in Wallese. Issues are always Clarified, Events invariably Exert Pressure, Problems are Faced (good) or Not Faced (bad), and the World is either On the March (good) or At the Crossroads (neutral) or Facing a Crisis (bad). No article may be composed in Wallese unless it includes at least one of the following terms: "grass roots", "integration", "horizon", "general welfare." The frequent use of the "should and will" or "can and must" construction is also obligatory, as in the (imaginary) sentence: "The American people can and must free the forward march of technology from the dead hand of monopoly." The adjective "new" is much used, as: "new horizons", "new frontiers", and "the new democracy" (which means the old democracy minus all democratic elements). Like "adventure", another important word in Wallese,* it suggests something Different (and God knows we're sick of what we've got now), Positive, Exciting—something to which the old critical categories, which have proved so lethal in the hands of Irresponsible and Destructive critics, cannot be applied. Thus many of us are by now somewhat leery of both democracy and *The New Republic*, but how about the *new* democracy and the new *New Republic*? Perhaps the greatest sentence ever composed in Wallese is the following, from the hand of the master himself: "New frontiers beckon with meaningful adventure."

Wallese is not, of course, Henry Wallace's personal idiom. There is nothing personal about his writing—indeed, alienation from his own individual interests, values and enjoyment is the most striking thing about Wallace's whole "style" as a political figure. Unlike Churchill or Roosevelt, for example, who clearly got a big kick out of exercising power and hurling around the thunderbolts of political rhetoric, Wallace is lumpish, depressed, weighed down by a sense of duty (or of guilt?). His political personality curiously resembles Herbert Hoover's. "The words that spring from his mind," writes an admirer, "sometimes stumbling, sometimes leaping, are those of a man troubled, deeply troubled by the far-reaching sickness of these times. He takes little pride in his writing. . . . 'Strangely enough, I don't like to write,' he says."[2] As literary criticism, nothing could be wider of the mark: Wallace's words don't spring, they don't leap, and they don't even stumble; they just ooze. But it is true that his writing is that of a sick and troubled man, a man not at peace with himself, alienated from his own individuality, a man who doesn't enjoy writing because he senses obscurely that it has nothing to do with his own pleasure and convictions.

Wallese is a collective product, a style that has developed in liberal journalism more or less instinctively as a drapery for the harsh political realities of our time. The justification for calling it "Wallese" is that Henry Wallace has parlayed it into a career.

This is not to say that Wallace is an accomplished rhetorician, as, for example, Churchill is. On the contrary, he is a

* Cf. Wallace's "the adventure of the Hebrew prophets", which sounds more like Edgar than Henry.

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ghastly stylist by the most modest journalistic standards: dull, vague, repetitious, humorless, with a fatal affinity for the cliché. His rule is never to use one word where ten will do the job. Mrs. Roosevelt has said that Wallace reads better than he sounds in person; I have not heard him speak publicly, but I cannot believe this is an accurate statement. His tone is that of the principal of a progressive school addressing a parent-teacher meeting: "The job of reconciling Jeffersonian democracy to the impact of machine civilization is one which is going to take the most imaginative resources of all of us."[3] He begins a series of lectures, which were published in 1938 under the Wallesian title, *Paths to Plenty*: "In these lectures, I propose to consider the way in which the best elements in capitalism, democracy and religion can cooperate to lay a foundation for the long-term general welfare."

As the above sentence shows, the defects of his style are not only esthetic. Wallace never analyzes a problem: he barges around inside it, throwing out vague exhortations. The sentence quoted could have meaning only if Wallace defined the abstractions which comprise its entire content. But he continues: "Throughout this book, I have used the phrase, 'general welfare' liberally . . . Nowhere have I defined 'general welfare' . . . because I believe that in a democracy every individual ought to define the general welfare in his own way." This is perhaps the most revealing statement Wallace ever wrote. Aside from the absurdity of refusing to define one's terms on the grounds that this would violate the democratic right of each citizen to read his own definition into them—a right which Hitler always respected—it shows us why Wallace represses his own self in politics. The self-alienation is evident: if every individual has a right "to define the general welfare in his own way", then Wallace has the right. But he gives it up, as he gives up other personal rights and pleasures (such as the right to speak the truth and the pleasure of sticking to one's principles) because he wants to make himself an instrument through which "the common man" (i.e., everybody) expresses himself. If he defined terms, some people would be antagonistic; but Wallace wants to be loved, and followed, by *everybody*, just as he wants to believe every doctrine all at once. This tendency reaches its height in the matter of "the general welfare", for here is the key Wallese concept: a noun no one could possibly object to (for who but a fascist or a redbaiter could be perversely *against* welfare?) wedded to an adjective that is . . . general. The whole suggests a bold stand for the common man against his enemies, thus combining the maximum of safety with the maximum of emotive force. It is understandable that Henry Wallace would not want to endanger such a concept by defining it.

2. The Iowan Background (1888-1932)

THE personal evolution of Henry Wallace was nicely rounded out when the *N. Y. Times* for February 26, 1947, announced that he was changing his legal residence from Iowa to New York. Evolution is perhaps not the best word. Devolution might be better, considering that a competent corn breeder has become an inept editorialist and an honest crop statistician a fisher in the muddy waters of Stalinism.

Henry I and Henry II

The place to begin to understand Henry Wallace is with his grandfather, of the same name. "Uncle Henry", as he was known to every one, was born on the Western frontier of Pennsylvania in 1836, the son of a Scotch-Irish farmer who had emigrated from Ireland a few years earlier. Becoming a Presbyterian minister, he served as chaplain in the Civil War. Tuberculosis, a family weakness, forced him to give up the ministry and move West to the healthier climate of Iowa, where he became a farmer. He made a success of it, came to own several farms, and to edit and partly own a farm paper. In 1895, at the age of 60, he really began his career: he quarrelled with the other owners of the paper, who thought he was attacking the trusts too vigorously, and left to found his own paper, *Wallace's Farmer*. Published in Des Moines, Iowa, this soon became one of the most widely read farm papers in the country; it combined religion and agronomy, being respected for the soundness of its views on infant damnation and on hog cholera. Uncle Henry wrote a regular Sunday Lesson every week which was one of the most popular features of the paper; he piled up enough in advance for them to keep appearing for years after he died in 1918. But he was more than a rural pietist. Tall, bearded, with a fine presence, he had wit, character and backbone; he was a natural leader. Nationally prominent as a farm spokesman, he is said to have twice refused the Secretaryship of Agriculture. Like his grandson, he was a prolific writer. Three titles suggest his range: *Clover Culture; Trusts and How to Deal with Them; The Doctrines of the Plymouth Brethren.* At least one of his books is still extremely good reading: his simple, concrete description of how people ate, washed, worked, slept and amused themselves in the frontier Pennsylvania of his boyhood.[4] Sociologists and small boys should both find it fascinating. All in all, Uncle Henry was the kind of simple, strong, shrewd personality which the republic once produced but which rarely appears now; the contrast is strong with his grandson, who has many of his superficial traits and little of his inner strength.

Wallace's father, Henry Cantwell Wallace, inherited Uncle Henry's strong character, but seems to have lacked his spark of personality. Born in 1866, he ran the family farms for a while, later becoming professor of dairying at Iowa State Agricultural College at Ames, Iowa, and finally succeeding his father as editor of *Wallace's Farmer*. Like his father, he was a leader of the Midwest farmers against the railroads and the monopolies: for seventeen years he was secretary of the Corn Belt Meat Producers Association, which fought against the Chicago meat packers: he was also prominent in the struggle to get lower railroad rates on farm products. There was nothing at all radical about these activities: the Wallaces, as one of the most prosperous families in Des Moines, were solid Republicans and had as little use for Bryan and the populists as for the packing trust. Also like his father, Henry II was a Presbyterian, being especially active in Y.M.C.A. work. He served as Secretary of Agriculture under Harding and Coolidge, but the office which made his son a national figure was for the father an unhappy experience. The Republicans were the party of big business, and Hoover, the most influential cabinet member, blocked Wallace's attempts to get "farm relief" through such financially unorthodox methods as McNary-Haugenism. It was too early for the farmer to

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get consideration in Washington. When he died in office in 1924, Henry II was a frustrated and defeated man.

Henry Agard Wallace was born in 1888, while his father was teaching at Ames. He followed in the family tradition, winning a "champion plowboy" medal at the age of twelve. The well-known Negro botanist, George Washington Carver, who was a student and friend of Professor Wallace, used to take the young Henry on long walks in the country, arousing his interest in plant breeding. Wallace was graduated from Ames in 1910, took a trip to Europe in 1912, and married an Iowa girl, Ilo Browne, in 1914. Soon after he got out of college, the young Wallace began to experiment with corn breeding. He observed that at state fairs the most regularly formed ears of corn won the prizes; he questioned this criterion on the reasonable grounds that a hog has no sense of beauty. His own experiments, which included a good deal of in-breeding, produced ears which were not lovely to look at but which were superior in more important factors such as hardiness and abundant yield. Out of these experiments came the Hy-Bred Corn Co., of Des Moines, which built up a prosperous business selling seed corn to farmers. This company, in which Wallace still owns a minority interest, is said to do an annual business of several million dollars. Wallace's income from Hy-Bred has been put at $50,000 a year. During the twenties, Wallace also occupied himself with editing the family paper and with statistical work on price fluctuations. In 1920 he published a technical book entitled *Agricultural Prices*, and in 1923, in collaboration with E. N. Bressman, a textbook on *Corn and Corn Growing*. The family lost *Wallace's Farmer* in 1930, after an ill-advised expansion in 1929; Wallace was abroad at the time and cabled his objections, but too late. The paper went bankrupt and was bought by new owners, who retained Wallace as editor on a salary. In the 1932 presidential campaign, Wallace broke with family tradition to support Roosevelt—and, as it turned out, to begin his public career.

3. The Secretary of Agriculture (1933-1940)

THE depression that began in 1929 hit agriculture even harder than industry. The business prosperity of the twenties had not included the farmer; while industrial prices soared, farm prices recovered only moderately from the post-war depression. Thus the farmer was caught between the "scissors", selling his crop at low prices and buying manufactured goods at high prices. The 1929 collapse widened the scissors: industrial production was cut, but there was no way for millions of farmers to get together on production cuts; the result was that farm prices, set on the only free market left in the American economy, dropped even faster than industrial prices.

By the end of 1932, the farm crisis was as severe, though not as well publicized, as the banking crisis. In the rich farm states of Iowa, Kansas and Wisconsin farmers were going in for direct action: forcibly preventing foreclosure sales; threatening to hang judges; dumping milk on the highways. In the Northwest there was even talk of secession from the union. Something drastic had to be done—but, as in the case of the banks, not too drastic. Just as the New Dealers closed the banks without taking advantage of the crisis to nationalize them, so they worked out a farm program which raised farm prices but reformed none of the social injustices within agriculture itself.

The New Deal farm program had only one aim: to raise farm prices. This could have been done, theoretically, either by enlarging the export market or by cutting production. The former method had been preferred by most farm leaders—including Wallace, Peek and Wilson—throughout the twenties; they had supported the various McNary-Haughen bills passed by Congress and vetoed by Republican presidents. McNary-Haughenism was an imitation of industrial practice: just as the steel industry dumped its products abroad at cut prices, so farm products would be dumped abroad, with Government subsidies making up the difference in price to the farmer. By 1932, McNary-Haughenism was economically dead; the export market would not absorb American farm surpluses at any price. The New Dealers therefore copied another industrial technique—cutting production. Their program gave the Secretary of Agriculture authority to pay cash benefits to farmers who signed contracts agreeing to reduce their planted acreage, the money being raised by taxes levied on the processors of farm products.

In his "farm speech" at Topeka, Kansas, that fall Roosevelt outlined the program, with excellent political results. In March, 1933, Wallace's first act as Secretary of Agriculture was to call a conference of some fifty farm leaders and to get them to agree on the Agricultural Adjustment Act, based on the Topeka program. The farm lobby was powerful, the farm situation was urgent, and within two months AAA had gone through Congress. The last free-market sector of the American economy had come under State control.

The Split in Agriculture

In the volumes of the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* covering the period 1925-1932 there are three entries under "Wallace, Henry Agard", all for technical papers in academic publications. In the single volume, 1933-1935, there is more than a solid column of articles by and about "Wallace, Henry Agard." This sudden rise to fame was somewhat accidental—or providential, as Wallace himself would probably say. Roosevelt's first choice for Agriculture was Tugwell, his second was Morgenthau; only when both had declined, did he fix on the Iowa farm editor.[5]

Wallace's first two years as Secretary of Agriculture were in many ways the most distinguished of his career; perhaps he himself was most satisfied and content then. He was fresh to national politics—an idealist of high intentions, with a scientifically trained mind and a thorough knowledge of agriculture. He seems to have impressed his subordinates in those days with his modesty, human decency, competence, energy and receptivity to new ideas. Even a conservative newspaperman could say of him, retrospectively: "To have talked with Henry Wallace in 1933 was an inspiration."[6] And the atra-

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bilious Frank R. Kent wrote in 1934 that Wallace was notable among the New Dealers for his "lack of cocksureness", adding: "He has no vestige of the infallibility complex . . . and does not attempt to cover up failure."[7] Last fall Kent wrote a bitter article in the *Saturday Evening Post* making just the opposite point about Wallace. It is not Kent, however, who has changed but Wallace.

The change took place in the first two years of Wallace's

The Mind of Henry Wallace: Close-Up No. 1

On January 16 last I had a half-hour interview with Henry Wallace in his office at "The New Republic." He was writing on a pad with lead pencil when I came in; he was coatless, his hair was rumpled, he looked harassed and yet mild; his office is small, about the size of the other staff writers' offices there. He explained he was writing that week's editorial and asked me what I wanted to talk to him about. He had apparently forgotten our appointment; he did not seem to "place" me very distinctly; he said he had never read POLITICS *and when I described it as a small-circulation magazine, he replied warmly that he was all for little business. His attitude throughout the interview was good-humored, unpretentious, shy, and friendly. I had come with my questions typed out on cards; I made notes on his replies. The following report is cast in a question and answer form, but it should be understood that Wallace's answers are not direct quotations but reconstructions based on my notes plus my memory, which is tolerably good in such matters.—D.M.*

Q.: In your first editorial in *The New Republic* you wrote: "Man must have freedom to learn the facts of the world he lives in and the right to speak about those facts. Those who deny this freedom have no part in the progressive movement." Do you think the Communists deny this freedom? A. (hesitantly): Yes, I suppose they do. Q.: Then would you favor their exclusion from the Progressive Citizens of America which you lead? A.: Who told you I was a leader of the PCA? That's not true—I have absolutely no connection with them! Q.: But you made the keynote speech at their founding meeting this fall. A.: Not at all. I was there and I gave them a talk, that's all. I'm not an officer of the PCA. I'm not even a member. Q.: Well, do you think Communists should be allowed in PCA? A.: How can you tell a Communist? What kind of litmus paper will you use? Rankin's, the Dies Committee's, the Department of Justice's? I don't want to go in for that kind of screening process. Q.: But suppose some one told you himself he was a Communist, what then? A. (after considerable fumbling around): Well, I think it would be undemocratic to discriminate against people just because they hold Communist beliefs.

Q.: What do you mean by "economic democracy"? A.: I've written a lot about that. But one thing I mean is a mixed economy—as much corporative, small business, cooperative and government ownership as will produce the most goods. I wouldn't allow strikes in government-owned plants—we can't go on having these tie-ups in basic industries; we've got to find some better way. Q.: What do you think of Lewis Corey's book on the mixed economy? A.: I don't know it. Who's Corey? Where does he teach? . . .

Q.: You once stated that AAA was an example of economic democracy because the farmers voted on all plans before they were adopted. Do you still believe this? A. (with more animation and confidence than at any other point in the interview): I think the AAA was the nearest we've come in this country to real economic democracy. Q.: You've stated that we have political democracy while the Russians have economic democracy. But do the Russian people vote on the adoption of Five Year Plans? A.: We must avoid war with Russia. Nothing is more important now than peace between Russia and America . . . We must be tolerant about Russia. . . . Q.: I can't see why you're so favorably impressed by the Soviet system. It seems to conflict with your own ideas and values. A.: You're probably one of those people who want war with Russia. (I denied this.) . . . When you look at Russia, you have to consider the historical background. Compared to what they had under the Czar, the Russian people are well-off today . . . Of course, I'm not a Communist. I'm an idealist, the Communists are materialists . . . I wouldn't want Communism over here, but it makes more sense in Russia.

Q.: Why does *The New Republic* call itself a progressive rather than a liberal magazine? A.: "Liberal" is too closely associated with the Manchester school of economics . . . I have always preferred to call myself a progressive rather than a liberal . . . I used to try to get President Roosevelt to use the term, "progressive", but he thought it was too closely connected with the Wisconsin movement. Q.: But in *Scribner's* for July, 1936, you rejected the 19th century "idea of progress" and the "materialistic optimism" that went with it. Yet you call yourself a progressive. A.: I must have been thinking of the way businessmen talk about progress. There's a difference between progress and progressivism. Q.: What is the difference? A.: Well, for one thing (long pause) . . . Of course, sometimes I get into a mood of wondering what it's all for. Sixty million jobs—but what do we do after that?

Q.: What is your position on universal peacetime military training? A.: I'm against it. Q.: Do you think Truman should grant an amnesty to all Conscientious Objectors? A.: Yes.

Q.: Do you think the ration for German civilians should be raised to 2,000 calories? A.: Only if they don't get more than other countries are getting. Q.: What is your opinion of the Potsdam agreement—is it too severe, not severe enough, or about right? A. (after some hesitation): I don't believe I've ever written anything about that. Guess I have no opinion for publication on that. Q.: What do you think about the prohibition of sending books and magazines to Germany? A.: Well, I don't know. I think you'd have to be on the scene to have an intelligent opinion. I wouldn't want to criticise the policy of the Army on that without knowing more about it. Q.: What did you think about Byrnes' Stuttgart speech last September? A.: Byrnes at Stuttgart? I don't recall any such speech.

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public career. That it has taken the liberal another decade to catch on is one more indication of their obtuseness. What happened to Wallace was very much like what happened to another non-political, scientifically-trained man of good intentions: Herbert Hoover. Wallace, like Hoover, found that clashes of interest do not yield to the engineering approach, and that something more than "objective analysis" of "the facts" is needed to solve the problems created by an inequitable economic system. Like Hoover, he cracked up because he lacked human and political imagination. The "purge" of the rebels in the Department of Agriculture, which came just two years after he took office, marked the end of Wallace as a fighter for the underdog. He has talked a good fight ever since, however.

Although AAA did a fairly good job in increasing farm income—with the help of a couple of opportune droughts—it said nothing as to how this income was to be distributed. There were rich farmers and poor farmers: in 1929, almost 8 million people lived on farms which yielded a *family* income of less than $600 a year, "based on value of products sold, traded or used."[8] There were also some 3 million wage-workers on farms, plus some 13 million people in tenant families and another 3 million in sharecropping families. Since AAA benefits were paid to the owner of the land, they did not help the last three categories. The question of the consumer also arose, since AAA failed to specify to what extent higher farm prices should come out of the middleman's and processor's profits and to what extent out of the consumer's pocket.

The new Secretary soon found himself in the middle of a conflict between the old-line farm leaders, who had traditionally dominated the policy of the Department, and a group of urban liberals brought in by the New Deal. The former were represented chiefly by the Farm Bureau Federation, the lobby of the top 25% of the nation's farmers—the "400-acre farmers." They wanted no change in the status of their tenants or hired hands, and no redistribution of farm income. The food processors—packers, canners, millers, milk distributors—were closely allied with the farm leaders. George Peek, the businessman who served as the first AAA administrator, put it in a sentence: "The sole aim and object of this act is to raise prices." This was true, historically. But a group in the Department felt that AAA should go farther. Their leaders were Rexford Tugwell, the Under-Secretary of Agriculture, and Jerome Frank, who was General Counsel of the AAA (and is now a Federal judge). Also prominent were Lee Pressman, of Frank's staff (now CIO general counsel); Frederick C. Howe, a veteran reformer who headed the newly created Consumers' Council in the AAA; and Gardner Jackson, who was Howe's aide. The rebels were concerned about AAA's effect on the agricultural underdog, and they worried when Justice Brandeis predicted to Jackson—accurately enough, as it turned out—that AAA would speed up centralization of farm ownership and push still more tenants down into the status of laborers. The old-line farm leaders worried not at all about such matters. As Peek remarked, apropos the rebels' social conscience: "This is the Department of Agriculture, not the Department of Everything."

There is no doubt that Wallace was worried, by social conscience, and, even more, by the existence of a conflict. He supported the rebels, discreetly but sympathetically, except when the pressures became too strong. Then he reacted as he did when one of the rebels brought him a horrifying report on conditions among farm laborers in the Connecticut River Valley: *We can't touch that. It's dynamite!** As indeed it was: the farm bloc was extremely sensitive about "interference" on behalf of the hired man, which is why Congress excluded farm labor from the scope of the Wages & Hours law. But when the going was not too tough, Wallace leaned toward the rebels. When Peek brought his differences with Frank to a showdown at the end of AAA's first year, Wallace accepted Peek's resignation. Characteristically, he then appointed Chester Davis, who turned out to be a more suave (and more effective) version of his predecessor. Also characteristically, he worked closely with the Farm Bureau in administrative matters even while he was backing the Bureau's opponents inside AAA: the Bureau's 1800 county agents also became the local AAA agents, thus getting an inside track which caused a journalist to note later on: "Although the New Deal's lavish benefit payments helped all farm organizations, they helped the Farm Bureau the most."[9] The Wallaces themselves were "400-acre farmers", so perhaps it is not surprising that the Secretary in the end backed the Farm Bureau but rather that it took him two years to make up his mind to do so. Meanwhile, he exercised his talent for being on both sides of the fence simultaneously, as well as sitting on it. As George Peek, a blunt and simple man, reminisces, almost with admiration: "Secretary Wallace, who had an elastic mind capable of any stretching, alone managed to be in both groups."[10]

Wallace and the Sharecroppers

The bitterest row was that over the sharecroppers. It gave Administrator Davis the opening he needed to purge the AAA rebels. It involved both justice to the oppressed and political dynamite. And it repeatedly exposed the timidity and opportunism that canker Wallace's personality.

As every one has known since 1934—and as practically no one knew before then—the millions of white and colored men, women and children who raise most of the South's cotton on a "share-crop" basis, are the bottom stratum of American society. The leftwing press used to call them "peasants", but the comparison was unfair—to the peasant. Few European peasants are as destitute as the sharecroppers. In 1933, a group led by H. L. Mitchell began to organize what later became the Southern Tenant Farmers Union—the first attempt to organize the sharecroppers. Mitchell, a Socialist, got Norman Thomas to make a trip through the South in 1934 and see things for himself. Appalled, Thomas issued a detailed report which received wide publicity. He also induced Dr. William Amberson, of the University of Tennessee, to make a sociological study of 500 typical sharecropping families; Amberson found, among other things, that the average *family* income was $262 a year.[11]

The Thomas report charged that AAA was making things *worse* for the sharecroppers, since the landowners naturally first withdrew from production those acres which were being worked by tenants and sharecroppers. Thus tens of thousands of sharecropping families not only got no cash benefits from AAA (since they were paid to the owner) but also were

* This is not a direct quotation; it is the recollection, 12 years later, of the person to whom Wallace was talking. In preparing this article, I interviewed a number of people who had been associated in one way or another with Wallace. Their memories of what was said on various occasions are put in italics, to indicate that they are to be taken as accurate in spirit but not in literal text.

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pushed off the land into unemployment. Wallace's reactions were those of a Secretary of Agriculture rather than a Champion of the Common Man. He issued a counter-statement accusing Thomas of exaggerating, for political purposes, the plight of the sharecroppers; and he denied that AAA was affecting them adversely.* When Mitchell and Thomas tried, repeatedly, to get an appointment to see Wallace about the sharecroppers, the Secretary was somehow always busy or out of town. They never did get in to see him.† They were, however, able to see President Roosevelt twice in the same period—presumably because he was not so busy.

The reasons for Wallace's coyness were not obscure. Sharecropping was essential—or thought to be—to cotton; cotton was essential to the South; the Southern Democratic Congressmen were essential to Roosevelt. Tugwell, whom Thomas *was* able to see, asked him quite frankly: *What would YOU do if you had to keep on good terms with the Southern Congressmen?* And a revealing exchange took place during one of Thomas' interviews with the President. Showing Roosevelt a copy of the standard AAA cotton contract (which had been drafted largely by Oscar Johnson, manager of the world's largest cotton plantation, the Delta farms), Thomas called his attention to its only safeguard for the sharecroppers: ". . . the planter shall . . . so far as possible, maintain on this farm the normal number of tenants and other employees." *FDR: That can mean something or nothing. THOMAS: It means nothing. FDR (nettled): I'm a damn sight better politician than you are, Norman. THOMAS: That's obvious, since you are sitting behind that desk, and I'm in front of it. FDR: What you don't understand is that a new breed of politicians is growing up in the South, and we must go slow on them.*

It seems not too wild a surmise that Wallace refused to see Thomas because he did not want to face the fact that the sharecroppers had to be sacrificed for political reasons. Tugwell and Roosevelt were more honest—or cynical—about it.

The Real Fight: Milk & Meat

The Tugwell-Frank group fought hard on the sharecropper issue, but they didn't get anywhere. Davis was forced to send an official AAA investigator, Mrs. Mary Myers, down to Arkansas. Her report, which backed up the Thomas-Mitchell charges, was shown to Senator Joe Robinson, who happened to be (a) from Arkansas, and (b) the Democratic majority leader. Joe didn't think much of the Myers report; it was never made public.

The rebels' position was weak because the interests of the sharecroppers—like those of the farm wage-workers, who didn't even get publicity out of AAA—clashed with those of the powerful organized farmers. Wallace, therefore, resolutely stifled the sympathies which the sharecroppers, as the commonest of Common Men, no doubt aroused in him.

In dealing with the food-processing interests, however, the rebels had a much stronger tactical position, since here the enemy was not The Farmer (who is Good in our political ideology) but Big Business (which is Bad). They also had the advantage of Wallace's undercover support: as a Mid-West farm leader, Wallace, like his Republican father and grandfather, was as instinctively against "the monopolies" as he was instinctively for "the farmer."

The main struggle was over opening the books of the food processors. The contracts they signed with AAA allowed them to get together to fix prices without laying themselves open to prosecution under the anti-trust laws; in return for this considerable concession, AAA stipulated that (a) the consumer should get some consideration; and (b) the farmers should get some benefit from any price increase—in short, that fixed prices should not simply result in bigger profits. Clearly, as Roosevelt had remarked about the cotton contract, such stipulations could mean something or nothing, depending on how the contracts were actually administered. A "friendly" administration would mean that the AAA contracts would be merely a means of rigging prices to mulct the consumer, as was the case with most of the NRA codes. General Counsel Frank was not "friendly": he insisted that every contract include a clause giving the AAA the right to inspect the books of the company so as to see just what the higher prices meant to the farmer and the consumer. Wallace supported this view by ordering that no contract was to be signed until it had been approved by Frank's office. The food companies resented this provision as Unamerican and Unconstitutional—also for more serious unexpressed reasons—nor were they placated when Frank pointed out that they were not obliged to sign an AAA contract unless they wanted to. The farm organizations, who had long worked amicably with the food interests, went along with them on this issue, as did Administrator Davis of AAA. The rebels were closely allied with the veteran reformer, Frederick C. Howe, and the Consumers' Council he headed inside the AAA. "With the pressures of both camps upon him," writes Wallace's personal bard, Russell Lord,* "Wallace fell silent and uncommunicative. A lion for principle, he would not or could not bring himself at the time, it seemed, to enter into differences when differences became personal. He hated quarreling; it literally made him sick. So he sat silent, and seemed for weeks on end at this critical juncture inept, irresolute, helpless."[12] This interpretation is nonsense—the differences were not personal but principled—but the picture of Wallace's reactions to any kind of a struggle is accurate. Wallace wants two things above all others: to be friends with every one, and to win. In a fight, you make enemies and you may lose.

The Great Purge

The conflict ended abruptly on February 5, 1935. That morning the leading rebels—including Frank, Jackson, Howe and Pressman—found on their desks when they arrived for work a note from Chester Davis requesting their resignations

* The following year, he backtracked. "We recognize," he told a Congressional committee on March 5, 1935, "that the AAA cotton program has probably added to the immediate difficulties of sharecroppers . . . It is inevitable in a period of emergency that such disturbances occur." Two days later (March 7, 1935) he testified as to desirable amendments to AAA but proposed nothing to help the sharecroppers. Wallace is not the man to fight against the inevitable (or even the probable).

† This glacial reception was mildly surprising to Thomas, who had met Wallace several times and had found him friendly and even cautiously interested in Socialist ideas. Wallace had, in fact, sent in a $25 check to Thomas' 1932 campaign fund, thus boxing the political compass in true Wallacian style: a registered Republican, he gave money to the Socialists and voted with the Democrats.

* In his newly-published *The Wallaces of Iowa*, a turgid rhapsody which reads like a cross between a J. Walter Thompson institutional ad and a campaign biography. (See full-page ad elsewhere in this issue for another point of view.)

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"forthwith." There had been no warning at all; in fact, just a few days earlier, the rebels had won a victory over Davis, with Wallace's aid, in the matter of opening the books of the canned asparagus industry. Except for the cynical Pressman, they were all convinced that Davis had acted without Wallace's knowledge and that once "H.A." heard about it he would discipline Davis. Gardner Jackson, in particular, should have recalled Wallace's reaction a few months earlier when he had told him about a secret meeting of the milk interests in Philadelphia to plan how to force the rebels out of the Department. Wallace had shown no moral indignation, no ardor for great principles, but had ruminated with cool detachment: *You know, Pat, I can't understand you. You always want to act when you see something wrong. I don't. I want to sit under a tree. The cycle of time brings all things . . . I'm in an impossible situation here; the pressures are great; I think I'll have to drop either Davis or Frank.*

In actuality, not only had Davis acted with Wallace's approval, but Wallace, as he himself told the press two days later, had secretly agreed to drop the rebels two months earlier. A good excuse was needed. Davis found it in a legal interpretation of the cotton contract which Frank's office had put out; the interpretation limited the right of the owner to dispossess his sharecroppers. Davis convinced Wallace that the interpretation was not only incorrect but was a deliberate attempt to put over "a fast one"; he demanded that Wallace choose between him and the Frank group; this time Wallace chose Davis. The coup was shrewdly timed to take place while Under-Secretary Tugwell, who had used his influence with Roosevelt to protect the rebels, was in Florida on vacation. By the time he heard about it and rushed back to Washington to protest, it was a *fait accompli.*

The purgees tried all day to see Wallace who, as is his wont at unpleasant moments, was just not around. Finally, late in the afternoon, word came that he would see two of them. Frank and one other went in to his office. *WALLACE: Jerome, you've been the best fighter I've had for my ideas, but I've had to fire you. The farm people are just too strong. I've got to go along and you've got to go. FRANK: All right, it's your choice and you have to make it yourself. I understand. But why not at least tell us about it? Why let us hear about it first from Davis? WALLACE: I just couldn't face you. FRANK: Will you let me hold up my resignation two or three days? There are some lawyers I brought into the division and they have families and I want a few days to get them jobs in other agencies. WALLACE: That sounds reasonable. I'll talk to Chester about it.* He went off to talk to Chester and didn't come back. After waiting in his office until seven, the other two went home.

The next day the papers carried the story. The *N. Y. Times* quoted "Department officials" as predicting an end to " 'business-baiting' and sharp criticism of middleman practices which Mr. Davis had always regarded as unwarranted." Unidentified "spokesmen for Secretary Wallace and Mr. Davis" charged that "those who resigned were troublemakers who let their social theories stand in the way of restoring farm prosperity." On February 7, Wallace held a press conference; he was uneasy, haggard, on the defensive, the picture of a guilt-ridden man. He evaded all questions as to the reasons for the purge, saying only that it had been undertaken "in the interests of the greatest possible harmony." REPORTER: "The right-wingers were ousted last year and now the leftwingers are going. Where is the boat headed for?" WALLACE: "You can't have the ship listing right and then left . . . It must go straight down the middle of the road."

The purge also resulted in the reduction of the AAA Consumer's Council to a research agency, thus removing its power to annoy the packers and canners. One may imagine the crisis of conscience Wallace went through in those days: by family tradition and personal conviction he was the foe of big business—no theme is harped on more constantly in all his writings, indeed, from the beginning up to the present, than the evils of monopoly—and yet here he was giving the victory to the forces of Satan inside his own Department. A few days after the purge, he arranged an accidental meeting with Frank at Tugwell's apartment. Awkwardly, after much embarrassment, he admitted he felt badly about the whole affair, and asked whether Frank would be willing to return to the Department as Solicitor, a higher post than AAA Counsel but one safely removed from the battle-line. Not much attracted to the job, Frank said he would think it over; Wallace, however, must have "talked to Chester", for the offer was never formally made. A year later, the two men met again; Wallace, who by that time had concluded that he had been entirely wrong to go along with Davis' coup, told Frank that he had burned his diary for the period and that he never wanted to think about it again. Thus the rebels may be said to have scored a "moral victory". Their opponents were no doubt quite satisfied with the extremely materialistic victory they had won.

The Social Effects of AAA

According to the Wallace legend, the seven years in Agriculture were years of (a) progressive reform and (b) successful stabilization of the farm economy. Both claims are . . . legendary.

We have just examined Wallace's behavior as to (a) in the crucial 1933-1935 period. It is true that later on the Department paid some attention to the agricultural underprivileged. But this was due not to Wallace but to Tugwell. After the 1935 purge, Tugwell was able to get a consolation prize from Roosevelt, who gave him authority to set up an agency, with an initial budget of $400 millions and 15,000 employees, to finance the removal of low-income farmers and sharecroppers onto subsistence homesteads on good land. This project, conceived by Tugwell and Harry Hopkins, was called the Rural Resettlement Administration; it later became the Farm Security Administration, and is now called the Farmers' Home Administration. Rural Resettlement aroused so little enthusiasm in Wallace that it was forced to begin life in the more sympathetic atmosphere of Ickes' Department of the Interior.[13] Later on, after the politically unpopular Tugwell had been forced out of the Government service, Wallace consented to permit Resettlement to migrate to his own Department, where, it is only fair to state, he became more friendly, appointing liberals to head it.

Rural Resettlement was essentially social work, and had no more profound effect on the evils it combatted than social work generally has. AAA was the significant part of the New Deal farm program, and its effects turned out to be just about what Brandeis and the rebels had predicted they would be. "This increased income," wrote the editors of the London *Economist* in 1937, "does not seem to have been very equally distributed among the different classes of people dependent

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upon it. Thus while net cash income in farming increased between 1933 and 1935 by 40%, the amount paid in wages to farm laborers increased by only about 14%. Tenant farmers, especially the sharecroppers, also do not seem to have received their fair share."[14] And a study made in 1937 by the Department of Agriculture itself showed that if under AAA the rich got richer, the rest of the song also applied: the poor got poorer. The percentage of farm acreage operated by tenants

The Mind of Henry Wallace: Close-Up No. 2

On January 10, 1947, Henry Wallace took part in the weekly "Meet the Press" program presented by the Mutual Broadcasting System in cooperation with "The American Mercury." His interviewers included Marquis Childs and Lawrence Spivak, editor of the "Mercury." The following excerpts are taken from Mutual's transcript of the broadcast—D.M.

Q.: I wonder what you think about Secretary Byrnes' conduct of our foreign policy. A.: I have never said anything about Secretary Byrnes' conduct of the policy, favorable or unfavorable, and don't intend to say anything favorable or unfavorable now. Q.: Mr. Wallace, wasn't your Madison Square Garden speech interpreted that way? A.: Yes, but Secretary Byrnes wasn't in my mind when I made that speech. . . . Q.: One thing we have all been curious about is why did you omit some of the parts of your speech that had been critical of Russia after you had been booed? A.: Because I felt I had been booed enough. I didn't see any particular point in making a riot there. . . .

Q.: Do you think President Truman could be renominated in 1948? A.: I assume he will be renominated. Q.: In that case, sir, do you have any political ambitions? Would that mean that you think there would have to be a third party formed in which you could carry them out? A.: I don't see how anybody nominated by a third party could realize any ambition . . . But I do know that we have to end as soon as possible the one-party system that we have in the United States at the present time. I think we've got to return to the two-party system. . . . Q.: You are not for a third party? A.: Not unless it is necessary in order that we may have a genuine two-party system. If there is going to be a conservative Democratic Party and a conservative Republican Party, obviously there will have to be a third party in order to kill off one of the old parties. We can't have two conservative parties. . . . Q.: Mr. Wallace, I was interested in your reference to the one-party system. It has now been about four months since you left the Truman administration. What is your opinion of the Truman administration and its position today? A.: I was exceedingly pleased by the economic report submitted by the President the day before yesterday . . . I also wrote an editorial commenting very favorably on the nomination of General Marshall for Secretary of State. Those two events seemed to me to strengthen the position of the Administration very materially. Q.: How does that jibe with your statement that we have a one-party system running the country today? A.: Well, possibly that remark can more characterize my feeling of two days ago than it does today.* I will grant that I haven't brought all my thinking quite completely up to date there. I did feel that way very strongly up until the day before yesterday. Q.: Does that mean that you have left the Democratic Party? A.: It does not mean that. That is some of the false propaganda which has been going around the country. Q.: Well, if there is only one party now, what difference does it make which party you belong to? A.: I referred to this bi-partisan policy which is being advocated in certain quarters. I certainly don't think it characterizes the great bulk of the members of the Democratic Party in this country. I don't think they feel that way at all. . . .

Q.: Mr. Wallace, don't you think the Communists, no matter how small a minority they are of any organization, are a disturbing influence, that they are anti-democratic? A.: Oh, sure; I agree with you on that. Q.: Well, why would you want them in any progressive movement? A.: I am not saying I want them in any progressive movement. Who said I wanted them in any progressive movement? Q.: Well, you spoke a minute ago— A.: If you allow that little thing to dominate your mind, it means that you have become a red-baiter, a person who wants to sic the FBI onto your neighbor; it interferes with everything you want to do, to do a job in the field of progressive activity here. It is just exactly what the enemy wants to see happen. I refuse to allow that to become a dominating consideration in my mind. Q.: What "enemy", Mr. Wallace? Who is the enemy? A.: The reactionaries.

Q.: Mr. Wallace, on May 8, 1942, you said: "This is a fight between a slave world and a free world. Just as the United States in 1862 could not remain half slave and half free, so in 1942 the world must make its decision for complete victory one way or the other." Don't you think that thing still holds true today, and that we are fighting against a slave world? A.: I do not think that. Q.: You think Russia is a free world? A.: I do not think Russia is a free world, but I do not think it is a slave world in the way I meant in 1942 and in the way you mean today. If I agreed with you, I would know that we have to fight now. Fortunately, I don't agree with you. I am sorry that you feel it is necessary to start a war against Russia today, and if you want to deny that, go right on the air now and deny that you want a war with Russia today. Q.: I deny that I want a war with Russia today. A.: I am glad I heard you deny it. . . .

Q.: Mr. Wallace, were you in favor of appeasement of the Nazis? A.: I certainly was not. Q.: I know you were against the aggressive actions of Hitler. Why do you now apologize for or explain away the aggressive actions of the Russians? A.: Because I think they are of a different nature altogether. Q.: Isn't aggression aggression, no matter what the nature is, so far as the people who are taken over are concerned? Do you think the Poles think that the aggressive action against them is any different than the Czechs thought when Hitler took them over? A.: I think it is quite a different situation at the present time. Q.: Will you explain what the difference is, Mr. Wallace? A.: I think it would take a very long time to explain, and I think there would be grave misunderstanding caused over the air if we started on that long path of explanation. . . .

* Two minutes ago, rather. See above.—D.M.

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increased from 29% in 1929 to 32% in 1935; between 1930 and 1935, 60,000 more sharecroppers and 200,000 more tenants appeared. "It is a conservative estimate," concludes this report made after four years of AAA, "that one-third of the farm families of the nation are living on standards of living so low as to make them slum families."[15]

The Economic Effects of AAA

What of part (b) of the Wallace legend: that his farm program saved agriculture from economic disaster? Farm income did increase greatly between 1933 and 1936, an increase in which AAA undoubtedly played a part. The improvement was effected at the expense of the consumer: AAA was business sabotage according to the Veblenian formula; Wallace had written quite frankly as early as 1920 that, if other ways of getting higher prices failed, farmers should "sabotage" their product "in the same heartless, efficient way as labor and capital" so that the latter "will be forced to come to an agreement with farmers on production and price matters." This sabotage was greatly helped along by severe nationwide droughts in 1934 and 1936. "By the combined efforts of man and nature," wrote Wallace after the 1934 drought, "the domestic wheat surplus was nearly wiped out, hog supplies were brought down . . . and corn supplies promised to be reduced."[16] (One recalls Benjamin Stolberg's quip: "There is nothing the New Deal has so far done that could not have been done better by an earthquake.") How successful AAA would have been without divine intervention is hard to say. Farm exports declined between 1932 and 1935. And the farmers to some extent got around AAA by more intensive cultivation of the remaining acres: thus although the cotton growers got $100 millions in benefits for withdrawing 10 million acres from production, they farmed the rest so energetically that the 1933 crop was actually bigger than 1932.

When the Supreme Court invalidated AAA in 1936, Wallace evolved his most celebrated farm policy: the "ever-normal granary". The program, for which Wallace got the idea from reading a thesis by a Chinese student at Columbia on "The Economic Principles of Confucius" (and which also resembled Joseph's farm policy in ancient Egypt), looked reasonable enough on paper: in good harvest years, the Government keeps up prices by buying surplus crops, which it stores; in bad years, it sells the stored crops. Thus the farmer is protected from market fluctuations and the consumer gets an even flow of farm products. However, neither Confucius nor Joseph had to worry about the capitalist market. What happened was that the farmers, assured of good prices, produced so much that by 1939 the Government's stocks of wheat, cotton and other farm products were so huge as to cause a storage problem —to say nothing of the vast sums of Government money tied up in the stored crops; nor was it clear how these surpluses were ever to be sold without breaking the market. The liberal historian Louis Hacker wrote sadly in 1938: "On the basis of the experiences in agriculture, it was possible to say that the New Deal was producing dislocations every whit as profound as those iniquities it was succeeding in redressing."[17] The war, of course, saved the situation by creating a big demand for farm products—whereupon the size of the stored-up surpluses became a proof of Wallace's foresight!

NOTE: The concluding part of this article will appear next issue. Contents: (4) The Prophet of the Common Man (1940-1944); (5) Wallace and the Communists (1945-1947); (6) Corn-Fed Mystic; (7) A Man Divided Against Himself.

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The Books of Wilhelm Reich

THE FUNCTION OF THE ORGASM. By Wilhelm Reich. Orgone Institute Press. New York 1942. $3.00.

CHARACTER-ANALYSIS. Principles and Technique, for Psychoanalysts in Practice and in Training. By Wilhelm Reich. Orgone Institute Press. New York 1945. $4.50.

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION. By Wilhelm Reich. Orgone Institute Press. New York 1945. $3.25.

THE MASS PSYCHOLOGY OF FASCISM. By Wilhelm Reich. Orgone Institute Press. New York 1946. $4.50.

THE core of Wilhelm Reich's theory lies in what he terms the "orgasm formula." The "genital," or normal, person experiences the sex act according to this formula: "mechanical tension—bio-electrical charge—bio-electrical discharge—mechanical relaxation." "The capacity for complete surrender to the *involuntary* contractions of the organism and complete discharge of sexual excitation in the acme of the sexual act" is lacking in the neurotic individual who, because of his fear of experiencing the vegetative sensations (particularly anxiety, rage, and sexual excitation), a fear resulting from his "sex-negative" education in our culture, has built up an "armor," which is partly characterological and partly muscular, and which prevents these sensations from breaking through to consciousness. The sexual energy, which Reich calls "orgone

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energy," is thus dammed up, providing a source for many kinds of psychic and somatic symptoms.

Reich has developed his own psychoanalytic technique to cure the neurotic. He calls it "vegetotherapy," since his goal is to break down this armor, (which results in character rigidity and physical and emotional "deadness"), thus freeing the bound-up vegetative energies and giving the neurotic the ability to surrender himself fully in the sex act. The complete success of this therapy results in the "genital" person, who is not only capable of full sexual satisfaction, but in order to remain healthy must experience it regularly.

The genital person has the following characteristics, which derive from his "orgastic potency:" (1) he develops a natural rather than a compulsive morality, which generally leads to his fidelity to one partner, but only so long as the relationship is sexually satisfactory; (2) he does not view work as a necessary evil but as a "joyous vital activity," which must have a personal interest for him; (3) his sublimation in work does not arise from a suppression of sex, but his energy oscillates between sex and work, and he gives himself fully to both; and (4) he is capable of acting and reacting rationally, without recourse to "mysticism, religiosity, superstitious beliefs, or an infantile longing for a guiding father-figure."

A society composed of such genital characters might develop a new form of government, a "work democracy" (not to be confused with the formal democracy which we know today), based on "actual achievement in work and actual responsibility of each individual for his own existence and social function."

How can these genital persons develop in our present society, which is founded on the belief that "morality is antithetical to instinct," that "achievement is antithetical to sexuality?" Obviously, individual psychoanalysis can help comparatively few. It is also better to prevent neuroses than to cure them.

It is above all necessary to revolutionize the early education of the child and the authoritarian child-parent relationship. In early childhood, the insistence on excremental cleanliness, the ban on masturbation, the encouragement of self-restraint in all ways (taunt of "cry-baby," etc.)—which is intended to make the child submissive to authority and eventually capable of life-long monogamy, succeeds in repressing its natural spontaneity, and the child's true nature is buried under a mask, an armor, with which he defends himself from experiencing all forms of excitation (pleasure, anxiety, hatred), the expression of which he fears may incite the hostility of his environment. His surface self-control covers the two deeper layers of his personality: (a) his sadistic, destructive anti-social layer, just beneath the surface; and (b) his deepest core, where "sociality, spontaneous enjoyment of work, and capacity for love" are inborn.

The neurosis which develops from this repression of natural feelings is seen not only in personality traits and mental attitudes, but also in the facial expression, the voice, the walk, etc. Neurotics may be classified generally as "masochistic," "hysterical," "compulsive," etc., each type possessing special physical and mental characteristics. The character develops as a way of dealing (unsuccessfully) with the conflicts of the child-parent relationship, and at the same time perpetuates these conflicts, since they remain in the unconscious.

The neurosis is not confined to any class or country or political system; it is an epidemic which attacks the masses of people everywhere today. We must attempt, therefore, to change our culture (says Reich) which is sex-negative, into a sex-affirmative one, by the following measures: (1) making nakedness a matter of course in play and in bathing, for the child equates "covering-up" with "taboo;" (2) asserting the child's right to the sexual satisfaction which is natural to any given period of his growth, such as thumbsucking, masturbation, sex-play with other children; (3) not only explaining the process of procreation when the child expresses curiosity about it, but also teaching him that procreation is only a by-product of the sex act, not its true purpose, which is to give pleasure; and (4) informing adolescents about contraception and giving them the privacy necessary for sex relations. For the adult: adequate housing, contraceptives, clinics for the treatment of sexual disturbances, sex education for the masses of people.

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In evaluating Reich's theory, we may follow one of three paths, all diverging from the necessary question, "Is the theory scientific?" The bio-electrical charge, which Reich says is generated and discharged during the sex act, is either (a) visible and measurable, as he claims; or (b) it is nonsensical fantasy; or (c) it is reasonable or possible.

There is nowhere in these books the citation of any statistics, or any description of experiments which actually measured "orgone energy" at the onset of the sex act, or during it, or at its completion. In "The Function of the Orgasm," there is a group of photographs, two of which show the apparatus used by Reich, and a few graphs which are said to represent the "skin potential" under various stimuli. For example, one is entitled, simply, "mucous membrane of the anus of a woman in a state of sexual excitation." Since these experiments are not described, nor their results tabulated, one could hardly assume anything more than that such a machine existed and that it was at some time used to record what the operator of the machine believed to be the "skin potential" of a certain undetermined number of unclassified persons under undescribed conditions. This is not science, in the ordinary sense of the word. Therefore, it is reasonable to decide that since the presence of "orgone energy" in the sex act is not scientifically proven, this proposition is to be rejected (the burden of proof is on the scientist) and with it the psychological and political conclusions which Reich develops from the "fact" of orgone energy in the sex act.

However, one may arrive at another, equally reasonable, conclusion: to reject the orgone theory, but also to deny Reich's own baffling contention that the "discovery" of orgone is his most valuable contribution to social theory. Despite the insistence of Reich's claim as a physical scientist, he remains a psychoanalyst, and as a psychoanalyst, he invites judgment by a different standard altogether. Psychoanalysis does not prove its generalizations, yet no one who has experienced the flash of understanding which some of its insights have given him will ever discredit it for that reason alone.

In judging Reich as a psychoanalyst, one may begin again by examining the psychoanalytic core of his theory, that is, that *perfect* sexuality is necessary for normality. We may certainly reject this also! Not that we minimize the importance of sexual happiness to mental health—that would be unlikely in our Freudian era. But what is a normal person? I suggest that he is one who knows his own nature, accepts it without

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shame or guilt, and deals rationally with the limitations put upon its fulfillment by his cultural milieu. Whatever degree of maturity may become realizable in a higher culture, the normal person of today may certainly cling to some childish (pre-genital) desires.

Also, while sexual frustration may surely lead to anti-sociality, why should a happy sex life be the only requirement for Utopian citizenship? Alas, life is not so simple! On the contrary, it seems to me that the degree of sexual pleasure is —at least so far—only subjectively determined; and that its intensity may vary in individuals and at different times in the same individual and still be satisfactory and "normal."

All psychoanalytic therapy tries to develop in the neurotic the ability to love (notwithstanding Reich's protests of isolation in this respect); its reason for being is the hope and the belief that beneath the cruel, destructive, irrational wishes, which are sometimes fully revealed only in the psychoanalytic process, there is a loving, reasonable, creative human being—and that this human being is eventually capable of independence and self-government. Surely this is the philosophy of psychoanalysis, and is not confined to Reich.

The process of sublimation remains mysterious. It is no more definitively clarified by Reich's explanation (that successful sublimation alternates with successful sexuality in the sex-affirmative person and that only the pre-genital impulses are thus utilized) than Freud's (that the undischarged sexual energies may expend themselves in cultural activities, utilizing both pre-genital and genital impulses).

But with these reservations, one may affirm Reich's own wise statement that "everyone is right in some way." (This is a difficult concept for us radicals, who appear to have a special propensity for monotheism; it would seem to be difficult for Reich's own followers and also for Reich himself.) If one can overcome his disappointment in failing to find here the Messianic message (and who can lightly renounce such a beguiling promise as this one!), and try to accept with scientific detachment the many stylistic characteristics which may at first distort the real value of the ideas—the author's confused, often obscure, repetitious, violent, painfully unhumorous, almost paranoiac manner—he will be rewarded with some marvelously acute criticism of our culture, which can be of the greatest value to the political theorist.

In what does Reich's "rightness" lie? Having rejected what he himself would consider his major premise, what rightness can we accept?

I believe his most valuable contribution is his brilliant application of general psychoanalytic knowledge to social criticism—an application so keenly illuminating of the basic political questions of our period: the failure of the Soviet Revolution, the psychological basis for fascism, the inadequacies of Marxism—that after reading him, one can no more consider politics apart from psychology than one can, after Freud, interpret Hamlet without reference to the Oedipal conflict. Reich's theory of character, that there is today a prevailing neurosis, which can be found in all classes and in all counries, among reactionaries and radicals alike, (a theory which could probably have sprung from the practice of Freudian psychoanalysis and not necessarily from the "discovery" of the orgone) is as valuable to the student of politics as it is to the psychoanalyst.

Psychoanalysis has for some time offered its profundities to the unwilling radical. Unfortunately, it is the special nature of this gift that even with the best will in the world he cannot easily accept it. The radical's "split personality" is perhaps the most constant source of bewilderment in his everyday life—it is his ever-recurring complaint against his fellow radicals! Psychoanalysis explains this discrepancy between revolutionary theory and practice not on the basis of weakness of will or lack of conviction (another of the radical's rusty beliefs is that the people are won to action by the reasonableness of his arguments), but of the tenacity of our earliest educational influences. This simple truth has implications for our revolutionary ends and means which may be too "radical" to be borne! It suggests a shift in locale for our propaganda: not alone the factory, but also the home. Not only the worker, but also the worker's wife. It is her character, so often stunted in our present society, which is the central influence on her child—and on the confidence and courage of the worker himself. To reach her, and to shape her influence to right ends, a new language must be fashioned. (She is notoriously practical! Is it, however, she who is "non-political," or the radical, whose politicalness is too narrow to embrace her real-life interests?)

Reich is one of the few writers on politics who understands the woman's role. He makes a daring contribution to the concept of sex equality in declaring that the woman's sexual nature is the same as the man's (Helene Deutsch, in *The Psychology of Women*, gives the orthodox view, that the normal woman is passive, masochistic, monogamous). He emphasizes the fact that more women than men are sexually disturbed;

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that liberal divorce laws mean little while women and children are still economically dependent; that true sexual freedom is possible only when people achieve the courage and independence to overcome possessive jealousy and the fear of leaving a compulsive marriage to seek a new partner; and he recognizes the danger to a free society in the woman's tendency to make the child the whole content of her life.

It is one of Reich's truisms that no deep-seated political change can take place without a change in the character structure of the people. The radical also attempts to change human nature, but he has yet to learn what human nature really is, beginning with his own. Does he fight against society's evils because they are abhorrent to his true nature, or is his hatred rooted only in his conscious, reasonable self? Only in the former case can he be whole-hearted, only then will his full energies be enlisted in the fight.

★

I suggest that the four books be read in the following order:

1. *The Function of the Orgasm.* The history of Reich's psychoanalytic training, his quarrels with the orthodox Freudians, and the development of his orgone theory; a description of orgone energy: where it is discovered, its manner and speed of movement, and its connection with psychosomatic disease. Reich concludes that "psychology has now become an experimental natural science." Some of Reich's principled differences with Freud are here introduced: (a) whether neurosis is a sexual disturbance (Freud) or specifically a genital disturbance; (b) the origin of anxiety; (c) sublimation: whether some sexual repression is necessary to culture (Freud); (d) the death instinct: whether destructiveness is a biological drive (Freud) or the result of disappointment in love or of loss of love.

2. *Character Analysis.* This is the most valuable book of the four, a classic in psychoanalytic writing. Reich describes the prevailing neurotic character structure, tracing its development from the Oedipus situation. In "Vegetotherapy," Reich's special psychoanalytic technique, the analyst is first concerned not with the unconscious material which comes to consciousness through free association (which may appear "too soon" to be effective), but with the patient's "resistances," that is, his characteristic behavior in defending himself against both the unconscious material and analytic insight. Although "real people are mixed types," as Reich says, these brilliant sketches clarify many traits which we glimpse dimly and sometimes uncomfortably in ourselves and are a constant source of speculation in our attempts to understand our environment. Similar treatment will be found in Horney's *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, and in Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, both good books, but I found Reich's study more penetrating and more specifically related to social criticism.

3. *The Sexual Revolution.* A discussion of sex morality in the United States and in the USSR. The failure of the sexual reform program initiated in the USSR by the Revolution was caused by the sex-negative character of the people, which leads them everywhere to prefer their relative calm to the hardships of dynamic living. Reich also blames the Soviet leaders for placing more emphasis on the economic problems than on the sexual problems, and for failing to formulate a theory of sexual reform. They erroneously believed that once the Revolution was established, sexual reform would automatically follow. The Marxist over-evaluates economic forces; he ignores the psychological factor and especially the fact that everybody, regardless of class, is concerned with sexual happiness above everything else. The Soviet leaders also idealized the asceticism of the early revolutionaries and thus set up an unrealistic standard for the ordinary people . . . Reich's weakest analysis is that of the American scene. While he correctly characterizes this country as "sex-politically progressive," he does it less than justice by quoting from only one source, and at inordinate length: Judge Lindsey's *Revolt of Modern Youth*, published over twenty years ago and limited to a description of adolescents. Of course, there are many backward sections, so that one cannot easily generalize, but the educational vanguard is today not far behind Reich in matters concerning the pre-school and nursery school child. (However, his program for adolescents would surely be considered too radical). The mother of a small child attending a progressive nursery in this city told me she had gone to the director for advice about what she termed her child's excessive masturbation. The director quietly replied, "Why shouldn't she masturbate? I hope she is able to enjoy it all her life!" Even the child-care booklet published by the U. S. Dept. of Labor, a reference book for many farm and urban households, shows an understanding of these problems; and Gesell's experiments at Yale have led the progressive parent far ahead of the rigid behaviorism of a few years ago, by his respect for the child's natural stages of development and his counsel to "let the child decide" in feeding and toilet training schedules.

4. *The Mass Psychology of Fascism.* An absorbing analysis of totalitarianism, especially in Germany and the USSR. Sexual suppression in the authoritarian patriarchal family creates the sadistic anti-social character layer of the human being of today, the character base for fascist ideology. Family fixation leads to nationalism, religious mysticism, ideas of racial purity, leader worship. Lenin's program for eventual self-government failed because of the incapacity of the Russian people for freedom. "No freedom program has any chance of success without an alteration of human sexual structure." The Soviet politicians have done more harm to the progress of true world democracy than Hitler. Here, also, is Reich's political program for a work democracy. Work is now governed by duty and the necessity for making a living. For the best development and gratification of the "biological urge for activity," there are required: (1) establishment of the best external work conditions, especially the worker's contact with the product of his labor; (2) the prevention of rigid character armoring which inhibits the natural urge for work; (3) a gratifying sexual life. Work responsibility develops when the worker loves his work. "Any rational work process is spontaneously and intrinsically directed against irrational life functions."

ETHEL GOLDWATER

THE MARCH OF PROGRESS

It was an offer of a hard job: to put vigor and educational purpose into Cleveland's limping Foreign Affairs Council . . . He found, in 1934, a membership of 300 women, 50 men . . . Cleveland's Council now has almost 4,000 members, of whom half are men.

—"Time," Jan. 6, 1947.

LASKIANA

There is no foreign institution with which, in any basic sense, it [the American presidency] can be compared because, basically, there is no comparable foreign institution.

—Harold J. Laski: "The American Presidency" (Harper, 1940, p. 11).

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BOLSHEVISM AND STALINISM

by Paul Mattick

THE alleged purpose of Trotsky's biography of Stalin* is to show "how a personality of this sort was formed, and how it came to power by usurpation of the right to such an exceptional role." The real purpose of the book, however, is to show why Trotsky lost the power position he temporarily occupied and why his rather than Stalin's name should follow Lenin's. Prior to Lenin's death it had always been "Lenin *and* Trotsky"; Stalin's name had invariably been near or at the end of any list of prominent Bolsheviks. On one occasion Lenin even suggested that he put his own signature second to Trotsky's. In brief, the book helps to explain why Trotsky was of the opinion "that he was the natural successor to Lenin" and in effect is a biography of both Stalin and Trotsky.

All beginnings are small, of course, and the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky differs from present-day Stalinism just as Hitler's brown terror of 1933 differed from the Nazism of World War II. That there is nothing in the arsenal of Stalinism that cannot also be found in that of Lenin and Trotsky is attested to by the earlier writings of Trotsky himself.* For example Trotsky, like Stalin, introduced *compulsory labor service* as a "socialist principle." He, too, was convinced "that not one serious socialist will begin to deny to the Labor State the right to lay its hands upon the worker who refuses to execute his labor power." It was Trotsky who hurried to stress the "socialistic character" of inequality, for, as he said, "those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless, and the disorganizers." It was his opinion that everything must be done to "assist the development of rivalry in the sphere of production."

Of course, all this was conceived as the "socialist principle" of the "transformation period." It was dictated by objective difficulties in the way of full socialization. There was not the desire but the need to strengthen party dictatorship until it led to the abolishment of even those freedoms of activity which, in one fashion or another, had been granted by the bourgeois state. However, Stalin, too, can offer the excuse of necessity.

In order to find other arguments against Stalinism than his personal dislike for a competitor in intra-party struggles, Trotsky must discover and construct political differences between himself and Stalin and between Stalin and Lenin in order to support his assertion that without Stalin things would have been different in Russia and elsewhere.

There could not have been any "theoretical" differences between Lenin and Stalin, as the only theoretical work bearing the name of the latter had been inspired and supervised by Lenin. And if Stalin's "nature craved" the centralized party machine, it was Lenin who constructed the perfect machine for him, so that on that score, too, no differences could arise. In fact, as long as Lenin was active, Stalin was no trouble to him, however troublesome he may have been to "The Number Two Bolshevik."

Still, in order for Trotsky to explain the "Soviet Thermidor," there must be a difference between Leninism and Stalinism, provided, of course, there was such a Thermidor. On this point, Trotsky has brought forth various ideas as to when it took place, but in his Stalin biography he ignores the question of time in favor of the simple statement that it had something to do with the "increasing privileges for the bureaucracy." However, this only brings us back to the early period of the Bolshevik dictatorship which found Lenin and Trotsky engaged in creating the state bureaucracy and increasing its efficiency by increasing its privileges.

Competitors for Power

The fact that the relentless struggle for position came into the open only after Lenin's death suggests something other than the Soviet Thermidor. It simply indicates that by that time the Bolshevik state was of sufficient strength, or was in a position, to disregard to a certain degree both the Russian masses and the international bourgeoisie. The developing bureaucracy began to feel sure that Russia was theirs for keeps; the fight for the plums of the Revolution entered its more general and more serious stage.

All adversaries in this struggle stressed the need of dictatorship in view of the unsolved internal frictions between "workers" and "peasants," the economic and technological backwardness of the country as a whole, and the constant danger of attack from the outside. But within this setting of dictatorship, all sorts of arguments could be raised. The power-struggle within the developing ruling class expressed itself in policy-proposals either for or against the interests of the peasants, either for or against the limitation of factory councils, either for or against an offensive policy on the international front. High-sounding theories were expounded with regard to the estimation of the peasantry, the relationship between bureaucracy and revolution, the question of party generations, etc. and reached their climax in the Trotsky-Stalin controversy on the "Permanent Revolution" and the theory of "Socialism in one Country."

It is quite possible that the debaters believed their own phrases; yet, despite their theoretical differentiations, whenever they acted upon a real situation they all acted alike. In order to suit their own needs, they naturally expressed identical things in different terms. If Trotsky rushes to the front—to all fronts in fact—he merely defends the fatherland. But Stalin "is attracted by the front, because here for the first time he could work with the most finished of all the administrative machines, the military machine" for which, by the way, Trotsky claims all credit. If Trotsky pleads for discipline, he shows his "iron hand"; if Stalin does the same,

* *Stalin. An appraisal of the man and his influence. Edited and translated from the Russian by Charles Malamuth.* (Harper, $5) The first seven chapters and the appendix, that is, the bulk of the book, Trotsky wrote and revised himself. The last four chapters, consisting of notes, excerpts, documents, and other raw materials, have been edited.

* See for instance, L. Trotsky's "Dictatorship vs. Democracy," New York, 1922; particularly from page 135 to page 150.

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he deals with a "heavy hand." If Trotsky's bloody suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion was a "tragic necessity," Stalin's suppression of the Georgian independence movement is in the manner of a "great-Russian Russifier, riding roughshod over the rights of his own people as a nation." And *vice versa:* suggestions made by Trotsky are called false and counter-revolutionary by Stalin's henchmen; when carried out under Stalin's auspices, they become additional proof of the great leader's wisdom.

To understand Bolshevism, and in a narrower sense Stalinism, it is not enough to follow the superficial and often silly controversies between Stalinists and Trotskyites. After all, the Russian Revolution embraces more than just the Bolshevik Party. It was not even initiated by organized political groups but by spontaneous reactions of the masses to the breakdown of an already precarious economic system in the wake of military defeat. The February upheavals "started" with hunger riots in market places, protest strikes in factories, and the spontaneous declaration of solidarity with the rioters on the part of the soldiers. But all spontaneous movements in modern history have been accompanied by organized forces. As soon as the collapse of Czarism was imminent, organizations came to the fore with directives and definite political goals.

If prior to the Revolution Lenin had stressed organization rather than spontaneity, it was because of the retarded Russian conditions, which gave the spontaneous movements a backward character. Even the politically advanced groups offered only limited programs. The industrial workers desired capitalistic reforms similar to those enjoyed by the workers in more capitalistically advanced countries. The petty-bourgeoisie and important layers of the capitalist class wanted a Western bourgeois democracy. The peasants desired land in a capitalist agriculture. Though progressive for Czarist Russia, these demands were of the essence of bourgeois revolution.

The new liberalistic February government attempted to continue the war. But it was the conditions of war against which the masses were rebelling. All promised reforms within the Russian setting of that time and within the existing imperialistic power relationships were doomed to remain empty phrases; there was no way of directing the spontaneous movements into those channels desired by the government. In new upsurges the Bolsheviks came into power not by way of a *second revolution* but by a forced change of government. This seizure of power was made easy by the lack of interest that the restless masses were showing in the existing government. The October *coup,* as Lenin said, "was easier than lifting a feather." The final victory was "practically achieved by default . . . Not a single regiment rose to defend Russian democracy . . . The struggle for supreme power over an empire that comprised one-sixth of the terrestrial globe was decided between amazingly small forces on both sides in the provinces as well as in the two capital cities."

The Bolsheviks did not try to restore the old conditions in order to reform them, but declared themselves in favor of the *concrete results* of the conceptually backward spontaneous movements: the ending of the war, the workers' control of industry, the expropriation of the ruling classes and the division of land. And so they stayed in power.

The pre-revolutionary demands of the Russian masses had been backward for two reasons: they had long been realized in the main capitalist nations, and they could no longer be realized in view of existing world conditions. At a time when the concentration and centralization process of world capitalism had brought about the decline of bourgeois democracy almost everywhere, it was no longer possible to initiate it afresh in Russia. If *laissez faire* democracy was out of the question, so were all those reforms in capital-labor relations usually related to social legislation and trade-unionism. Capitalist agriculture, too, had passed beyond the breaking up of feudal estates and production for a capitalist market to the industrialization of agriculture and its consequent incorporation ino the concentration process of capital.

The Bolsheviks & Mass Spontaneity

The Bolsheviks did not claim responsibility for the Revolution. They gave full credit to the spontaneous movements. Of course, they underlined the obvious fact that Russia's previous history, which included the Bolshevik party, had lent some kind of vague revolutionary consciousness to the unorganized masses and they were not backward about asserting that without their leadership the course of the Revolution would have been different and most probably would have led to a counter-revolution. "Had the Bolsheviks not seized power," writes Trotsky, "the world would have had a Russian name for Fascism five years before the March on Rome."

But counter-revolutionary attempts on the part of the traditional powers failed not because of any conscious direction of the spontaneous movements, not because of Lenin's "sharp eyes, which surveyed the situation correctly," but because of the fact that these movements could not be diverted from their *own* course. If one wants to use the term at all, the "counter-revolution" possible in the Russia of 1917 was that inherent in the Revolution itself, that is, in the opportunity it offered the Bolsheviks to restore a centrally-directed social order for the perpetuation of the capitalistic divorce of the workers from the means of production and the consequent restoration of Russia as a competing imperialist power.

During the revolution, the interests of the rebelling masses and of the Bolsheviks merged to a remarkable degree. Beyond the temporary merger, there also existed a deep unity between the socializing concepts of the Bolsheviks and the *consequences* of the spontaneous movements. Too "backward" for socialism but also too "advanced" for liberal capitalism, the Revolution could end only in that consistent form of capitalism which the Bolsheviks considered a pre-condition of socialism, namely, state-capitalism.

By identifying themselves with the spontaneous movement they could not control, the Bolsheviks gained control over this movement as soon as it had spent itself in the realization of its immediate goals. There were many such goals differently reached in different territories. Various layers of the peasantry satisfied, or failed to satisfy, divergent needs and desires. Their interests, however, had no real connection with those of the proletariat. The working class itself was split into various groups with a variety of specific needs and general plans. The petty-bourgeoisie had still other problems to solve. In brief, there was a spontaneous unity against the conditions of Czarism and war, but there was no unity in regard to immediate goals and future policy. It was not too difficult for the Bolsheviks to utilize this social division for building up their own power, which finally became stronger than the whole of society because it never faced society as a whole.

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Like the other groups which asserted themselves within the revolution, the Bolsheviks, too, pressed forward to gain their particular end:—the control of government. This goal reached farther than those aspired to by the others. It involved a never-ending struggle, a continuous winning and re-winning of power positions. Peasant groups settled down after dividing the land, workers returned to the factories as wage-laborers, soldiers, unable to roam the country-sides forever, returned to the life of peasant and worker, but for the Bolsheviks the struggle only really began with the success of the Revolution. Like all governments, the Bolshevik regime involves submission of all existing social layers to its authority. Slowly centralizing all power and control into their hands, the Bolsheviks were soon able to dictate policy. Once more Russia became thoroughly organized in the interests of a special class —the class of privilege in the emerging system of state-capitalism.

The Party "Machine"

All this has nothing to do with Stalinism and "Thermidor" but represents Lenin's and Trotsky's policy from the very day they came to power. Reporting to the Sixth Congress of Soviets in 1918, Trotsky complained that "Not all Soviet workers have understood that our administration has been centralized and that all orders issued from above must be final . . . We shall be pitiless with those Soviet workers who have not yet understood; we will remove them, cast them out of our ranks, pull them up with repressions." Trotsky now claims that these words were aimed at Stalin who did not co-ordinate his war-activity properly and we are willing to believe him. But how much more directly must they have been aimed at all those who were not even "second-rate" but had no rating at all in the Soviet hierarchy. There already existed, as Trotsky relates, "a sharp cleavage between the classes in motion and the interests of the party machines. Even the Bolshevik Party cadres, who enjoyed the benefit of exceptional revolutionary training were definitely inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests with the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown."

Trotsky holds, of course, that the dangers implied in this situation were averted by Lenin's vigilance and by objective conditions which made the "masses more revolutionary than the Party, and the Party more revolutionary than its machine." But the machine was headed by Lenin. Even before the Revolution, Trotsky points out, the Central Committee of the Party "functioned almost regularly and was entirely in the hands of Lenin." And even more so after the Revolution. In the Spring of 1918 the "ideal of 'democratic centralism' suffered further reverses, for in effect the power within both the government and the Party became concentrated in the hands of Lenin and the immediate retinue of Bolshevik leaders who did not openly disagree with him and carried out his wishes." As the bureaucracy made headway nevertheless, the emerging Stalinist machine must have been the result of an oversight on the part of Lenin.

To distinguish between the ruler of the machine and the machine on the one hand, and between the machine and the masses on the other implies that only the masses and its top-leader were truly revolutionary, and that both Lenin and the revolutionary masses were later betrayed by Stalin's machine which, so to speak, made itself independent. Although Trotsky needs such distinctions to satisfy his own political interests, they have no basis in fact. Until his death—disregarding occasional remarks against the dangers of bureaucratization, which for the Bolsheviks are the equivalent of the bourgeois politicians' occasional crusades for a balanced budget—Lenin never once came out against the Bolshevik party machine and its leadership, that is, against himself. Whatever policy was decided upon received Lenin's blessing so long as he was at the helm of the machine; and he died holding that position.

Lenin's "democratic" notions are legendary. Of course state-capitalism under Lenin was different from state-capitalism under Stalin because the dictatorial powers of the latter were greater—thanks to Lenin's attempt to build up his own. That Lenin's rule was less terroristic than Stalin's is debatable. Like Stalin, Lenin catalogued *all* his victims under the heading "counter-revolutionary." Without comparing the statistics of those tortured and killed under both regimes, we will admit that the Bolshevik regime under Lenin and Trotsky was not strong enough to carry through such Stalinist measures as enforced collectivization and slave-labor camps as a main economic and political policy. It was not design but weakness which forced Lenin and Trotsky to the so-called *New Economic Policy*, that is, to concessions to private-property interests and to a greater lip-service to "democracy."

Bolshevik "toleration" of such non-bolshevik organizations as the Social Revolutionists in the early phase of Lenin's rule did not spring, as Trotsky asserts, from Lenin's "democratic" inclinations but from inability to destroy all non-bolshevik organizations at once. The totalitarian features of Lenin's Bolshevism were accumulating at the same rate at which its control and police power grew. That they were forced upon the Bolsheviks by the "counter-revolutionary" activity of all non-bolshevik labor organizations, as Trotsky maintains, can not of course explain their further increase after the crushing of the various non-conformist organizations. Neither could it explain Lenin's insistence upon the enforcement of totalitarian principles in the extra-Russian organizations of the Communist International.

Trotsky, Apologist for Stalinism

Unable to blame non-bolshevik organizations entirely for Lenin's dictatorship, Trotsky tells "those theoreticians who attempt to prove that the present totalitarian regime of the U. S. S. R is due . . . to the ugly nature of bolshevism itself," that they forget the years of Civil War, "which laid an indelible impress on the Soviet Government by virtue of the fact that very many of the administrators, a considerable layer of them, had become accustomed to command and demanded unconditional submission to their orders." Stalin, too, he continues, "was molded by the environment and circumstances of the Civil War, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship." The Civil War, however, was initiated by the international bourgeoisie. And thus the ugly sides of Bolshevism under Lenin, as well as under Stalin, find their chief and final cause in capitalism's enmity to Bolshevism which, if it is a monster, is only a reluctant monster, killing and torturing in mere self-defense.

And so, if only in a round-about-way, Trotsky's Bolshevism, despite its saturation with hatred for Stalin, leads in the

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end merely to a defense of Stalinism as the only possible self-defense for Trotsky. This explains the superficiality of the ideological differences between Stalinism and Trotskyism. The impossibility of attacking Stalin without attacking Lenin helps to explain, furthermore, Trotsky's great difficulties as an oppositionist. Trotsky's own past and theories preclude on his part the initiation of a movement to the *left* of Stalinism and condemned "Trotskyism" to remain a mere collecting agency for unsuccessful Bolsheviks. As such it could maintain itself outside of Russia because of the ceaseless competitive struggles for power and positions within the so-called "communist" world-movement. But it could not achieve significance for it had nothing to offer but the replacement of one set of politicians by another. The Trotskyist defense of Russia in the Second World War was consistent with all the previous policies of this, Stalin's most bitter, but also most loyal, opposition.

Trotsky's defense of Stalinism does not exhaust itself with showing how the Civil War transformed the Bolsheviks from servants into masters of the working class. He points to the more important fact that it is the "bureaucracy's law of life and death to guard the nationalization of the means of production and of the land." This means that "in spite of the most monstrous bureaucratic distortions, the class basis of the U. S. S. R. remains proletarian." For awhile—we notice—Stalin had Trotsky worried. In 1921, Lenin had been disturbed by the question as to whether the *New Economic Policy* was merely a "tactic" or an "evolution." Because the *NEP* released private-capitalistic tendencies, Trotsky saw in the growing Stalinist bureaucracy "nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration." But his worries were unfounded; "the struggle against equality and the establishment of very deep social differentiations has so far been unable to eliminate the socialist consciousness of the masses or the nationalization of the means of production and the land, which were the basic social conquests of the revolution." Stalin, of course, had nothing to do with this, for "the Russian Thermidor would have undoubtedly opened a new era of bourgeois rule, if that rule had not proved obsolete throughout the world."

The Result: State Capitalism

With this last statement of Trotsky's we approach the essence of the matter under discussion. We have said before that the *concrete* results of the revolution of 1917 were neither socialistic nor bourgeois but state-capitalistic. It was Trotsky's belief that Stalin would destroy the state-capitalist nature of the economy in favor of a bourgeois economy. This was to be the Thermidor. The decay of bourgeois economy all over the world prevented Stalin from bringing this about. All he could do was to introduce the ugly features of his personal dictatorship into that society which had been brought into existence by Lenin and Trotsky. In this way, and despite the fact that Stalin still occupies the Kremlin, Trotskyism has triumphed over Stalinism.

It all depends on an equation of state-capitalism with socialism. And although some of Trotsky's disciples have recently found it impossible to continue making the equation, Trotsky was bound to it, for it is the beginning and the end of Leninism and, in a wider sense, of the whole of the social-democratic world-movement of which Leninism was only the more realistic part. Realistic, that is, with regard to Russia. What was, and still is, understood by this movement under "workers' state" is governmental rule by the party; what is meant by "socialism" is the nationalization of the means of production. By adding control over the economy to the political control of the government the totalitarian rule over all of society emerges in full. The government secures its totalitarian rule by way of the party, which maintains the social hierarchy and is itself a hierarchical institution.

This idea of "socialism" is now in the process of becoming discredited, but only because of the experience of Russia and similar if less extensive experiences in other countries. Prior to 1914, what was meant by the seizure of power, either peacefully or violently, was the seizure of the government machinery, replacing a given set of administrators and lawmakers with another set. Economically, the "anarchy" of the capitalistic market was to be replaced by a planned production under the control of the state. As the socialist state would by definition be a "just" state, being itself controlled by the masses by way of the democratic processes, there was no reason to expect that its decisions would run counter to socialistic ideals. This theory was sufficient to organize parts of the working class into more or less powerful parties.

The theory of socialism boiled down to the demand for centralized economic planning in the interest of all. The centralization process, inherent in capital-accumulation itself, was regarded as a *socialistic* tendency. The growing influence of "labor" within the state-machinery was hailed as a step in the direction of socialism. But actually the centralization process of capital indicated something else than its self-transformation into social property. It was identical with the destruction of *laissez-faire* economy and therewith with the end of the traditional business-cycle as the regulator of the economy. With the beginning of the 20th century the character of capitalism changed. From that time on it found itself under permanent crisis conditions which could not be resolved by the "automatic" workings of the market. Monopolistic regulations, state-interferences, national policies shifted the burden of the crisis to the capitalistically under-privileged in the world-economy. All "economic" policy became imperialistic policy, culminating twice in world-wide conflagrations.

In this situation, to reconstruct a broken-down political and economic system meant to adapt it to these new conditions. The Bolshevik theory of socialization fitted this need in an admirable way. In order to restore the national power of Russia it was necessary to do in a radical fashion what in the Western nations had been merely an evolutionary process. Even then it would take time to close the gap between the Russian economy and that of the Western powers. Meanwhile the ideology of the socialist movement served well as protection. The socialist origin of Bolshevism made it particularly fitted for the state-capitalist reconstruction of Russia. Its organizational principles, which had turned the party into a well-functioning institution, would re-establish order in the country as well.

The Bolsheviks of course were convinced that what they were building in Russia was, if not socialism, at least the next best thing to socialism, for they were completing the process which in the Western nations was still only the main *trend* of development. They had abolished the market-economy and had expropriated the bourgeoisie; they also had gained complete control over the government. For the Russian workers, however, nothing had changed; they were merely faced by

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another set of bosses, politicians, and indoctrinators. Their position equalled the workers' position in all capitalist countries during times of war. State-capitalism is a war-economy, and all extra-Russian economic systems transformed themselves into war-economies, into state-capitalistic systems fitted to the imperialistic needs of modern capitalism. Other nations did not copy all the innovations of Russian state-capitalism but only those best suited to their specific needs. The second world war led to the further unfolding of state-capitalism on a world-wide scale. The peculiarities of the various nations and their special situations within the world-power frame provided a great variety of developmental processes towards state-capitalism.

The fact that state-capitalism and fascism did not, and do not grow everywhere in a uniform manner provided Trotsky with the argument of the basic difference between bolshevism, fascism and capitalism plain and simple. This argument necessarily stresses superficialities of social development. In all essential aspects all three of these systems are identical and represent only various stages of the same development—a development which aims at manipulating the mass of the population by dictatorial governments in a more or less authoritarian fashion, in order to secure the government and the privileged social layers which support it and to enable those governments to participate in the international economy of today by preparing for war, waging war, and profiting by war.

Trotsky could not permit himself to recognize in Bolshevism one aspect of the world-wide trend towards a fascist world economy. As late as 1940 he held the view that Bolshevism prevented the rise of Fascism in the Russia of 1917. It should have long since been clear, however, that all that Lenin and Trotsky prevented in Russia was the use of a non-Marxian ideology for the fascist reconstruction of Russia. Because the Marxian ideology of Bolshevism merely served state-capitalistic ends, it, too, has been discredited. From any view that goes beyond the capitalist system of exploitation, Stalinism and Trotskyism are both relics of the past.

London Letter
THE FIRST 18 MONTHS

TODAY we are enduring an industrial crisis in Britain. The ostensible cause is the failure of coal supplies to meet the requirements of factories and power stations. And undoubtedly this is one of the contributory causes, in that industrial production is actually increasing at a greater rate than the production of coal. But the basic cause lies in the lack of incentive among the workers, an inarticulate but paralysing lack of faith in the present social structure, which prevents them from working with greater energy.

The Labour Government has been in power for eighteen months, and still the miners and other industrial workers find that their economic position is as bad as ever. The general standard of wages, in comparison with the cost of living, is such that very few married workers can do more than just make ends meet. On the other hand, there is little reason to work longer hours, since any extra money earned is subjected to a heavy income tax. Added to this, for the present the classic capitalist whip of unemployment is comparatively remote from the majority of the workers. In consequence, men and women in many occupations, particularly miners, textile workers and railwaymen, who are economically badly off in comparison with skilled industrial workers, are certainly not working to full capacity. Go-slow campaigns on the railways are on the increase, and the Christmas period saw a very high record of absenteeism among miners and transport workers.

These facts become even more significant when it is remembered that the workers who appear to show most apathy towards the government's appeals for harder work are those who are most closely involved in nationalisation schemes. The coal mines became "vested in the people" at the beginning of this year. The railways are due for nationalisation under the Transport Bill which is now going through its various parliamentary stages. But neither miners nor railway workers seem inclined to give nationalisation a preliminary vote of confidence by working any harder during the transition period.

The British workers, in fact, seem to be losing their faith in the State as a provider of concrete amenities. The muddle of food and housing questions, the continued scarcity and high prices of goods, the divergence of living standards between rich and poor which is growing to pre-war proportions, are all causes for increasing discontent, at present represented rather in apathy than in active resentment.

As yet it is impossible to make any adequate assessment of the actual effect of nationalisation on the lives of the workers, since in the first *major* industry to come under government control, coal mining, the scheme has only been in operation for some six days as I write this letter. However, we can draw certain conclusions from the set-up of this first nationalised large-scale industry, and we can also make some comments on the conditions of workers already in various kinds of government employment of an industrial nature.

As I have shown in previous letters, the various boards which control the nationalised coal industry are composed of a miscellany of interested individuals, held to represent the people in general. Financiers, discredited politicians, retired generals, elderly coal magnates and trade union leaders who have climbed into the peerage rub shoulders in the strangest galaxy of incompetence that could be imagined. In this situation it is inevitable that the colliery executives, who are in many cases ex-owners and almost always the former capitalist managers, should continue to wield effective control in the industry. As for the workers, they are merely changing employers, since they have virtually no say in the conduct of the industry. It is unlikely that they will find the new master and man relationship any better for a nominal change of ownership, and they will undoubtedly begin very soon to feel resentful at a mock socialization which in fact does not provide any of the means for workers' control towards which the British miners have been attracted ever since the days when syndicalism was a powerful force in the industry.

The present condition of workers already in government employment was shown by some recent figures published by the Ministry of Labour. These compare the wage-rates of 16 major industries in 1946 with those of 1938. The lowest increase of all is shown to be that of employees in Government industrial establishments, whose wages have increased by only 52%, as compared with a general average increase of 89%. Before the war, Government industrial employees stood at the head of the list of industries. Now they have fallen to fifth place among the sixteen categories. These facts show that it is more difficult to gain better conditions from the State even than from private employers, and that the State, because of its greater power, can better afford to risk industrial strife than could the individual capitalist. This conclusion is underlined by the fact that the only union in Britain which

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puts forward a scheme providing for real workers' control in their industry is that of the postal workers. They have no illusions of the virtues of the state as an employer; postal workers are among the worst paid employees in the country.

IN contrast with the apathy shown by the workers towards nationalisation schemes is their response to concrete improvements in conditions. For some time now there has been agitation among the unions for a shorter week, but this has been resisted both by employers and by the Labour Government, on the old theory that if a man toils for longer hours he automatically produces more. In its crudest form, the theory was recently expressed thus by a leading shipbuilding magnate:

". . . work does no-one any harm, while idleness does."

But an experiment by Standard Motors has knocked the bottom completely out of this idea. By a 12½% *reduction* in hours of work, they found that an *increase* in production of more than 30% was obtained, as well as a great improvement in health and the virtual elimination of absenteeism. This example shows that the British workers are ready to respond to concrete benefits, but that they are developing an increasing suspicion of schemes, such as nationalisation, where the actual benefit is perpetually deferred.

IN previous paragraphs I have referred to the miners, railway workers and postal workers as being badly paid. But neither these nor the land workers belong to the most sweated British industries. At an even lower income level are the industries connected with textiles and clothing, where the average weekly wages are such as to make it literally impossible, at present costs of living, to maintain an adequate standard of life.

Here are some figures of average weekly earnings in various branches of these industries.

Flax spinning:	£2.16.4	($11.40)
Laundry work:	£3.1.0.	($12.30)
Dressmaking:	£3.1.6.	($12.40)
Hemp spinning:	£3.4.5.	($13.00)
Hosiery:	£3.7.8.	($13.65)
Dyeing and cleaning:	£3.8.4.	($13.80)
Cotton weaving:	£4.0.1.	($16.20)

These figures compare with an average for industry as a whole of about £5 ($20.20) a week, and are out of all relation to present costs of living. They partly explain the shortage of clothing in Britain, since textile and clothing workers are too undernourished and overworked to produce efficiently. The industry is also afflicted by a chronic shortage of labour, for, naturally enough, nobody goes into it if he or she can find anything better. The textile and clothing factories wait anxiously for general unemployment to solve their problem of labour with an influx of desperate men and women. In this respect, as in many others, they have retained that flavour of laissez-faire capitalism at its worst which reminds one of their classic role as the most scandalous examples of the early forms of industrial exploitation.

UNTIL recently, the presence of a Labour Government has made the industrial workers reluctant to strike over their grievances. But events of the past few weeks must have given the government a grave shock.

There was the strike of road-haulage men over claims they had made months ago for shorter hours, holidays with pay, better overtime payment and a regulated week. The strike began on the 6th January, among drivers in the East End. By the next day almost all the London drivers were out, affecting mail transport and the principal food markets, and the strike also spread to many provincial centres—involving in all about 30,000 men—the biggest transport strike since 1926.

London was virtually without road transport for a week. The union officials tried to bully the men back; the government threatened to call in soldiers to break the strike. The union then called a special delegate meeting for Sunday, the 12th, no doubt hoping to get a snap decision to go back. But the rank-and-file invaded the meeting in hundreds, so that for once a union meeting was conducted really democratically. The speeches of the union leaders called forth the singing of "Tell me the old, old story!" and it was decided to continue the strike.

On Monday, 13th January, soldiers started transport work. At all the London fruit, vegetable, meat and fish markets, the porters walked out as the soldiers moved in. 17,000 dockers struck immediately, and the 'busmen and railway depot workers threatened sympathetic action. The result was that within three days the strike was ended, with promises of immediate negotiations on the men's claims.

This strike was significant for a number of reasons, apart from its rapid success. Firstly, it was begun by a class of workers who have not been in the habit of indulging in wildcat strikes of recent years, and therefore indicates a new outcropping of militancy. Secondly, it took place in an industry which is scheduled for early nationalisation, and thus illustrated the men's lack of faith in nationalisation as a solution for their ills. Thirdly, it showed fine examples of practical solidarity, a sure sign of the return of general militancy in the Labour movement. But perhaps its most important aspect lay in the fact that it represented the largest manifestation of lack of respect for the Labour government which had occurred among the workers since it assumed power.

A further aspect which impressed me was that the public, standing in food queues, showed a good deal of sympathy with the strikers. The spirit was much more friendly than in previous strikes.

One interesting fact which has been revealed by this strike and the recent go-slow movement of London railway shopmen has been the growth of organisations among the workers which run on parallel lines to the unions and have taken over the functions of militant action which the unions themselves have now lost. The dockers' sympathetic strike was organised by a Port Workers' co-ordination committee, which arose out of the last big dock strike and claims to have 56,000 members. The railway go-slow movement has revealed a similar organisation of railway workers, containing members of all the railway unions and several craft unions, and said to include 40,000 men. A conference of 50 delegates of this movement was held recently at Crewe and formulated demands for substantial wage increases.

These organisations are not rival unions. They are concerned only with co-ordinating militant action which the unions refuse to support. They have no permanent staff or rigid organisations, and are therefore less vulnerable, more democratic and more effective than any breakaway unions could possibly be. If these movements are as strong as they claim to be, and continue to grow, they should represent a really vital element in English industrial life of the near future.

A DEPRESSING feature of the present political scene in England is the great diminution of support for any kind of minor opposition group. This applies not only to the Communists, who are reaping the harvest of their collaborationist tactics during the war, but also to many bodies which show no such cause for distrust. Pacifist organisations like the P.P.U., left socialist and libertarian organisations like the

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I.L.P. and the anarchist groups, protective organisations like the Freedom Defence Committee and the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors, are all suffering from lack of financial support, decline in the circulation of their magazines, and a general lowering of interest in their activities.

The reasons are several. Firstly, people have less money to give away or spend on literature, because incomes have fallen, the cost of living has risen, and a great deal must be spent on goods to replace household necessities, etc., which have deteriorated during the war.

Secondly, during the war there was certainly a greater spirit of conformity among the majority and a correspondingly stronger spirit of rebellion among the discontented, so that critical minority organisations were more enthusiastically supported, while the conditions of wartime produced a solidarity among resisters which has died away again, except for the faithful core in each group. After almost every war, if it is not followed by an immediate revolutionary period, there is a time-lag of apathy. We are experiencing that now.

Thirdly, the advent of the Labour Government undoubtedly raised hopes among many who had been opposed bitterly to Churchill. Some left socialists and pacifists—but no anarchists that I know of—felt that the Labour Government should be supported as a step in the right direction. Disillusionment is setting in among these people, but it will be some time before they admit their mistakes so far as to join in open attacks on the Labour Government.

Fourthly, many of the organisations concerned have failed to make their positions sufficiently clear during the war, and have equally failed to adapt themselves to the present situation. The I.L.P., for instance, had no clear line of opposition to the war, and now has no really perceptible difference of policy from the Labour Party. Consequently, it is steadily losing support, reformists like Brockway and Padley leaving to give their support to the Labour Party, and some of the left elements also retiring in disgust because of the party's generally weak policy. The P.P.U. during the war, concentrated on preserving its structure rather than on actual resistance, and today is so split between religionists and political elements that it can formulate no coherent policy towards the present world situation.

Generally speaking, none of the minority groups has any longer a reliable basis among the workers. The S.P.G.B. and the Trotskyists, in spite of their claims, are becoming steadily more isolated in their doctrinaire idiocies, the Socialist Vanguard Group, *pace* comrade Gaussman, is even more insignificant in influence (though admittedly rather more sensible), the I.L.P. is losing its trade union points of influence, and the anarchists have felt a serious falling away of the working class support they enjoyed on the Clyde during the war.

LACK of support for minority groups would not be so bad in itself if it were not accompanied by a general feeling of indifference to issues of liberty or common humanity. Famines, repressions, concentration camps, the most blatant attacks on individual freedom, fail to raise a response among the masses, who are indifferent to such things in a way which would have been impossible thirty years ago. At times like these one begins to regret the extinction of at least some of the old liberal virtues.

Meanwhile, a few tiny neo-Fascist groups are creeping out of hiding. Mosley is trying to start a publishing house; an odd body called the Kingdom House Group genuflects to a statue of Hitler; John Becket, formerly Mosley's lieutenant, has re-emerged with the British People's Party; and there are a number of small anti-semitic groups. These bodies at present have no real influence except among a very small section of the middle class, and the people who demand their suppression most zealously are those, like the Communists and their fellow travellers, who themselves wish to impose a totalitarian rule over life and thought. Nevertheless, some of the neo-Fascists deserve watching. They attempted unsuccessfully to cash in on ex-servicemen's grievances, but if there is any great economic distress in the future, particularly among the middle class, they may well succeed in forming the nuclei of larger fascistic movements. Mosley and the other known fascists are completely discredited, but no doubt their successors will arise if the occasion is favourable. But, for the present at any rate, the re-opening of employment in the colonies will remove the most likely fascist elements from the country.

However, we should be very foolish if, like many fellow-travellers, we allowed these at present harmless groups to divert our attention from the actively totalitarian policies which the Labour Government and the trade unions are following in Britain today. If Fascism comes to this country in any more or less naked form, the Labour Party will have played its part in conditioning the people to accept regimentation.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

WHY DESTROY DRAFT CARDS?

NOTE BY D.M.: On February 12 last, some four or five hundred Americans either publicly destroyed their draft cards or mailed them in to President Truman. The demonstrations signalized these individuals' decision to refuse further cooperation with military conscription. (See p. 31, January issue, for a full statement of their position.) In New York City, a meeting was held at which Bayard Rustin was chairman; speakers were: James Blish, David Dellinger, A. J. Muste, and myself; 63 persons destroyed their draft cards in the presence of reporters, cops, FBI agents and an audience of about 250. The following is what I said there.

THIS demonstration has two purposes: (1) to take a public stand against military conscription; (2) to protest against the preparations of the U. S. Government for World War III. Or, in general terms: civil disobedience and pacifism.

As to the civil disobedience: we have decided to attack conscription by the simplest and most direct way possible: that is, by refusing, as individuals, to recognize the authority of the State in this matter. I cannot speak for the motives of my comrades in this action. But for myself, I say that I am willing to compromise with the State on all sorts of issues which don't conflict too oppressively with my own values and interests. I pay taxes, I submit to the postal and legal regulations, which are not very burdensome, about publishing a magazine. These commands of the State appear to me to affect my life only in minor, unimportant ways. But when the State—or rather, the individuals who speak in its name, for there is no such thing as the State—tells me that I must "defend" it against foreign enemies—that is, must be prepared to kill people who have done me no injury in defense of a social system which has done me considerable injury—then I say that I cannot go along. I deny altogether the competence—let alone the right—of any one else, whether they speak in the name of the State or not, to decide for me a question as important as this. If it be argued that I am an American citizen and so have an obligation to "defend my country," I would note that my being born on American soil was quite involuntary so far as I was concerned, and that I have not since signed any social contract. In such a serious matter as going to war, each individual must decide for himself; and this means civil disobedience to the State power that presumes to decide for one.

2.

Many people think of pacifism as simply a withdrawal from conflict, a passive refusal to go along with the warmaking

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State. This sort of pacifism is better than assenting to the coercion of the State, but it does not go far enough, in my opinion. Pacifism to me is primarily a way of actively struggling against injustice and inhumanity; I want not only to keep my own ethical code but also to influence others to adopt it. My kind of pacifism may be called "non-violent resistance," or, even better, "friendly resistance." Let me illustrate. Pacifists are often asked: what would you have advised the Jews of Europe to have done after Hitler had conquered the continent —to submit peacefully to the Nazis, to go along quietly to the gas chambers? The odd thing about this question is that those who ask it have forgotten that this is pretty much what most of the Jews of Europe did in reality, not because they were pacifists, for they weren't, but because they, like most people today, had become accustomed to obeying the authority of the State: that is, essentially, because they recognized the authority of force. Suppose the Jews had been pacifists—or rather, "friendly resisters." They would not have resisted the Nazis with guns, it is true. But they would have resisted them with every kind of civil disobedience—they would have made it difficult, and probably impossible, for the Nazis to have herded them by the millions into the death camps. They would have done this by going underground in the big cities, ignoring the orders of the German authorities to report at a certain time and place, falsifying papers, establishing contacts with anti-Nazi groups and families in the local population and hiding out with them, taking to the forests and hills in country districts. Techniques of sabotage and evasion can always be worked out, provided one has developed the will to resist and has thought about the problem. But if one thinks in terms of law and order, of being part of an established society, there is no hope: for law and order today means war and violence. So we get the paradox that those who accept force as a means to social ends are likely to act in a passive, if not pacifist, way when the force is on the side of their enemies. While those who reject force are free to resist it in an active way.

The most common argument against pacifism is: what would you do if you saw a man torturing a child? Wouldn't you use force to stop him? I don't know what I would do; I know that I would try to prevent such an act, and I rather imagine that, if non-violent methods didn't work, I should attempt violence. To this extent, I suppose I am not a complete pacifist. But those who pose this problem do so only in order to make an analogy: if you would use force to prevent the torture of a child, why wouldn't you use force to prevent, say, the Nazis from killing and torturing thousands of children? The analogy seems to me defective. If I use violence myself in a concrete limited situation such as the one just outlined, then I can know to some extent what will be the results. Even if I have to kill the man in order to prevent him from killing the child, it can still be argued that my action is a just one, since, if one or the other must die, it is better the man die. But in a war against Nazism—or Stalinism—those who suffer on *both* sides are mostly as helpless and innocent as the child. Nor can we see what the results will be—or rather we can see all too clearly. The means that must be employed are morally so repugnant as to poison the whole culture of the victor. How does it punish the Nazis for massacring helpless Jews and Poles to massacre ourselves helpless Germans in saturation bombings? But if we use the instrumentality of the State and organized warfare, the only way we can prevent massacre and atrocities is to commit them ourselves—first; and justice is done for the innocent Jews and Chinese not by executing their murderers but by ourselves killing hundreds of thousands German and Japanese innocents. This is a kind of book-keeping which I don't accept.

To return a moment to the problem of the man who tortures the child: Tolstoy once remarked that people were always bringing this hypothetical monster up to him—you see, the argument is not a new one—but that, in a long lifetime full of the most varied experiences in war and peace, he had never yet encountered this brute. On the other hand, he *had* encountered, every day at every step, innumerable real men who hurt and killed other real men in the name of some creed or social institution. He had frequently met, in the flesh, judges and government officials and businessmen and army officers who habitually used violence toward the weak, who forcibly exploited the great mass of their fellow human beings. So he concluded, reasonably enough, that the problem of what to do about some hypothetical individual brute whom he had never personally encountered was not so important as the problem of what to do about the numerous real users of violence whom he was constantly meeting face to face. And he further concluded that it was the real and widespread use of violence that he was against, its use in war and in the defense of an unjust social system, and that pacifism was the only way to counter *that* violence.

Finally, let me admit that the method we have chosen to implement our protest against military conscription is open to many practical objections. How effective it will be I don't know. But I have adopted it because it is the only action I can think of which directly expresses my opposition to conscription. A beginning must be made somewhere. We can only hope that others will think of more effective ways to arouse people against the violence and killing which have become the most prominent features of the age we live in.

DWIGHT MACDONALD

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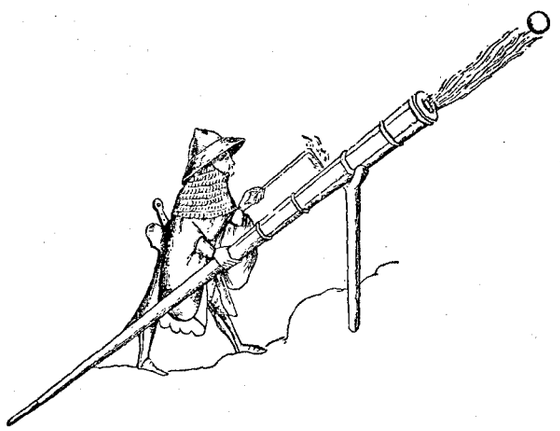

The Animoid Idea

by Norman Matson

PROGRESS—the notion that history is a process of inevitable improvement—is peculiar to our civilization and to modern times. The other great peculiarity of our culture (barring Christian revelation) is the invention and development of non-organic power for the movement of weapons and tools. It is usually supposed that Western civilization utilized mechanical prime movers because it was Progress-minded. But this is topsy-turvy: we invented mechanical prime movers and used them extensively centuries before we thought of Progress.

The gun (cannon), the first mechanical prime-mover, was known throughout Europe by the middle of the fourteenth century. Two centuries later, inevitable Regress was questioned by the historian, Bodin, whose major proofs were the invention of printing, the compass and the gun. Descartes a century later saw the possibility of the growth of man's knowledge. In the next century, the idea of Progress was formulated by Condorcet, Turgot and others, although it did not achieve popular acceptance for another hundred years. In a word, Progress did not invent technology; technology invented Progress. It is true that the philosophers of the Enlightenment hailed Progress before the true steam-engine was invented, but the science on which they based their idea was already in existence—a science that had issued *in toto,* one might dare say, from the gun-smithy and powder-mill; for the gun and the gun alone had stimulated the acquisition of knowledge about metals, chemicals, heat, mechanics, optics, etc.

The gun's predecessor was the bow, which in the fifteen thousand years of its estimated life changed little; it made less progress in all that time than the new thing, the gun, made in its first century. The arrow is a typical "animate" tool, its prime mover, man, being organic. The bullet is "animoid" because its inorganic prime mover has only a pseudo-animation. All animate tools—and they were the only kind known before the gun—improve or "grow" at a rate that accords with the growth of their living prime movers. This is imperceptible. The animoid tool progresses at a quite different, an *inhuman* rate—swift, accelerating, "inevitable"; and the extent of its progress is limited, apparently at least, only by the resources of the earth. The idea of Progress was born of an attempt to explain and propitiate this wholly new, this surprising behaviour. Progress, as cult, is a mechanization of human aspiration.

Progress as history is the increase and improvement of the community of the mechanical prime movers. Their "environment" is now world-wide, and includes an appropriate ideology, which is propagandist history and prophecy. What is new and good is animoid; what is oldfashioned and bad is animate.

While the "animoid" can itself have no purpose, being mindless despite its admixture of human effort, its major products are always its own increase, whether or not this increase benefit human beings. The more mechanical prime movers there are, and they have multiplied like rabbits in Australia, the more men are conditioned to depend upon and to tend them, and the faster the rate of Progress. This is the acceleration that appalled Henry Adams and others who couldn't think of a brake. (The only one suggested today is, oddly enough, more acceleration—we must "streamline the social sciences," etc.) Acceleration is not chosen, not decided upon in conference: it happens, like a town burning down, and we "Progressives" adjust ourselves to it, being marvelously adjustable creatures . . . It is of course true that man's collaboration is essential to Progress but little of this can be said truly to be voluntary and it has grown less and less so. We did not want to make an A bomb. We had to because somebody else was about to make one to use on us. This is also why the first gunsmith 650 years ago made a bigger and better gun.

The modern question, the real "revolutionary" question is: Who is for man? Who is for the animate *against* the animoid?

Who are today's Luddites?

1.

One of the differences between the warfare of animate weapons and mechanized warfare is that only the former can become a symbolic ritual. The animoid is always practical.

2.

When war became mechanized, it became continuous and permanent. There are no longer wars but War. Peace is the interval during which the people are conditioned to the enormous mechanical improvement that always appears under the stimulus of war.

3.

We speak of starting, stopping, modifying mechanized War

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as if it were the stream of a garden hose, a manual task, or a naughty habit. The Progressive must understand that the words "stop war" means "stop progress."

4.

The A bomb is final proof that technology can develop sufficient power to destroy the total technological establishment of an "enemy" nation. But Progress is integral and the technological establishment is not only national—it is world-wide. We know from the last wars that the whole suffers when a part is injured. Apparently the objective of technology is the destruction of technology. We do not yet know, however, how great an injury, how much demolition a part of the world-wide complex can endure without the whole beginning to die.

5.

Why do men make war? They know well that it will leave them poorer, sadder, less than they were. We know the two basic reasons—the choice of a risk of death (going as a soldier) over *certain* death for refusing; and the second to escape boredom. There's still another reason. Even unwilling participants in total war have an enemy, a secret one. It is Progress.

6.

Men have become merely spectators of the drama of Progress rather than actors in it. As participants, as helpers, men could feel Progress to be their own, they could in a manner of speaking love it. As drama it is not very interesting.

7.

The anti-Progressives are prudent, like men who in the city of the dictatorship watch an official parade. They will even cheer. Why not? After all, they have invested, too: they can try to hope; if the VLAST is a hideous fraud then so are their lives.

8.

Our ancestors, strong in tradition and in their decentralized handicraft economy, could not long deflect the current of progress though they wanted to and though it was much weaker than it is now.

The gun was despised and condemned. It increased nevertheless. Spinning and weaving machines were smashed in England, France, Germany, the Low Countries, and not only in the "Luddite" riots of the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Today the Neo-Luddites would reject the Atom bomb. But the current of Progress is stronger than ever. Today the mechanical prime movers are intimately involved in our day-by-day livelihood to an extent unimaginable a century ago. Today the slightest revolt against mechanical progress halts food on the way to our own mouths. Just as a general labor strike starves the strikers themselves to the extent that it is effective. This is why the revolt against the A bomb is purely verbal. No action is taken. No one suggests that we march upon Oak Ridge, or hang the subtle bombardiers.

9.

Progress as a relative expression, as the predicate of a discreet subject, is not in discussion. A man, a family, a village, a tribe, a city, state, can progress, obviously. But even with the discreet subject the verb becomes meaningless and absurd if it is meant too inclusively; thus a man or a group of men may progress in courtesy, in wealth, in manual skill, in health, in wisdom, in virtue—but in all of these at once?

When we ask the question: Do you believe in Progress? we do not mean do you believe that trains can move, trees grow, the measles spread. In short, we do not mean something *in* history, *but history itself.*

Thus the question is: Do you believe that universal history is a process of inevitable improvement of mankind?

10.

The progress of the mechanical prime movers and their tools is certainly a fact. Their progress may also be man's but every attempt to state this results in attributing to man a mechanized nature. Subtract his life from him and you subtract your difficulties, but since he is alive you become involved at once in the question of what is best for life.

If man has himself progressed by means of the mechanical prime movers and their tools the proof must lie in the comparison of man with man-plus-machines.

The man aboard an air liner bound for London has progressed in comparison with the man on board the paddle-wheeled *Savannah.* But this is a comparison of machines, not of men.

It is plainly possible for the passenger in the air liner "flying" over the ocean to be neither as skillful nor as wise a man as he who is busy in the rigging of a sailing ship. A man in a plane—especially a passenger—is not "flying." The plane is the only thing that is flying. If the plane had the faculties, it might enjoy flying the Atlantic. Many of its human riders do not even enjoy it. "Flying" becomes the dullest way to travel there is, and the reason for this is it is the most animoid.

11.

Idleness that is rest from essential (honorable) work is good; but what of idleness because essential work has gone to the machine? Even if man's enforced idleness be filled with a substitute for work that is pleasant, can we call this exchange Progress for the man? Is useless work better than useful work?

When we ask what to do with the new "leisure" provided by the machines, the customary answer is that we can study,

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or be artists, or "for a hobby" make unnecessary things with our hands. It is a painful subject. There is no answer. But most men will not be idle. It is contrary to their natures. They will busy themselves, making or breaking.

12.

The modern concept of work is animoid in origin. We judge past civilizations on the basis of our own dislike of work; but we here make the classic "p'au" mistake, our steamer "sails," our chemist "makes war." We are assuming that animoid and animate are synonyms.

When men give their strength toward doing something that is necessary to them and which would not be done if they did not do it, their work, however painful it may seem when there is too much of it, is never attended by one kind of pain too familiar to modern man—it is never unnecessary, and it is never made to seem puny and inglorious by contrast with the great power of the mechanical prime movers. Work may be a curse—it is also our only real "re-creation." The doing of more or less skillful work is not disliked by most men; on the contrary. When we forget this we are incapable of judging civilization.

With epithets of disapproval like "reactionary" or "superstitious" or "unprogressive" we obscure the nature of the machine-smashers' revolt. This had flared up, *successfully*, several times during the two or more centuries prior to General Ludd. In the late 1500's—that would be after a couple of centuries of widespread use of the hand-gun and coeval with the complicated and ingenious wheellock—a device for weaving ribbons that did the work of a number of men, appeared in Danzig: the weavers smashed it and strangled its inventor. Similar devices seem to have appeared a bit later in Germany, and perhaps elsewhere; they also disappeared. A steamboat of some sort is said to have navigated the river Fulda about 1650; the boatmen destroyed it. The productive animoid repeatedly appeared and was destroyed before the optimum group essential to the beginning of Progress could be established. For centuries after he had manifested mechanical aptitude adequate for the making of productive animoids, these were successfully resisted. The hanging of eighteen machine smashers in 1813 in Northumberland was a defeat that crowned several centuries of Luddite victories.

We have despised work for so long that we tend to forget that this is not necessarily the attitude toward work of other civilizations. We despise work because in factories and now on the farms, even small shops, our physical strength and even our skill (in most *accurate* manipulations) seems puny by comparison with that of the animoid—the motor or engine. Above all we hate it because its routine, its rhythm is in fundamental, incurable opposition to that of our hearts, our minds. This discord cannot be resolved and we know it and though we call idleness "leisure" it is at best a respite, and at the worst it is the sickness of him who would finally escape all effort, all definition by meaningless routines, narcotics, literature, drunkenness.

13.

To reverse Progress just a little is the idea behind arguments against the A bomb.

Let us suppose we succeeded—but if we did Regress would have set in. We must imagine regressive events being hailed as victories for the human race, and the headlines would read: ALL REPEATING FIRE-ARMS JUNKED IN FAVOR OF MORE HUMANE WHEELLOCKS: ADOPTION OF LONG BOW FORESEEN FOR NEAR FUTURE. And we would read: ATLANTIC CROSSED IN SMALL SLOOP, and—EXTRA! CONTINENT SPANNED BY MAN ON HORSE-BACK.

These last, however, have a familiar ring. And it is true the animate goes on proving itself, though the true drama of the conflict—shadow of the Transport flicking across the back of the crank who is wheeling a barrow from Spokane to Atlanta—is never mentioned.

14.

It may be that some societies did not invent and use mechanical prime movers because they did not want to. The truth then would involve their instinct of self-preservation, the defense of their *successful* way of life.

Societies like that of the Inca or the Pharoahs are thought of as "coasting" along. They "stagnate,"—their persistence is a matter of inertia rather than of effort. But couldn't the "stagnation" of such a society be seen also as a remarkable achievement of planning? If so we can understand why the ancient men who "invented" printing for his clay tablets, his fabrics, spun the potters wheel, the bow-powered lathe, only smiled when he made a toy's wheel whirl with the power of steam, smiled and forgot it. Balance, once achieved must have been a wholeness, a style that permeated everything; infractions of it were felt as discords, absurdities; thus the ancient Mexican, who never used the wheel, but put wheels upon a pull-toy, would surely have laughed at one big enough for use by grown men; and Hero, too, with his steam whirl-a-gig, had he seen it huge and working? To the Greek, that could have seemed horrible.

15.

Our civilization seems to have been the only one that tried to institutionalize insecurity. But men now as always prefer security.

16.

Nietzsche and Marx were both appalled by Progress. Both rejected the Christo-Judaic historical scheme. Nietzsche, convinced that progress was destroying man, proposed an acceptance of man's destruction in favor of something he called Superman. Marx favored a transcendental solution: a superanimate organism that would displace the "State." Neither suspected that Progress was a *new* fact—that our Progress could not be judged as a simple continuation of the ancient, animate world. Neither suspected that the concept of secular history as a universal *tendency* is a parody of the pageant of Revelation—Adam and Eve, the Fall, the appearance "on the highway of history" of Christ and then further events all leading to Judgment Day. They did not see that History and Progress are two sides of the same fabric, for before Progress began, and that is to say before inorganic power with its characteristic growth appeared on this earth, *there was no secular history*—no stream; the only history known was a consciously fictionized version of yesterday, static as any

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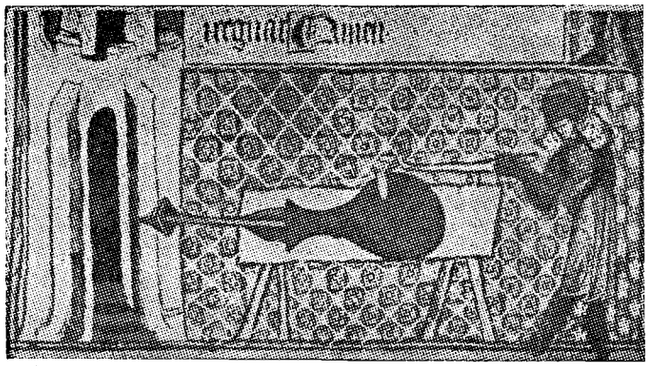

The Earliest Type of Cannon (1313)
From the illuminated MS of Milemete's "De Officiis Regum" (1327), Christ Church Oxford. This picture, like the other two, comes from the collection of the N. Y. Public Library.

completed story; history was a pool, sometimes a whirlpool, *but never a stream.* Christian history, the idea that events on earth have significance in another world, that all History marches to an End, supernatural, beyond our understanding, in other words a true End, this concept is grammatical, it is a full sentence; but the idea of a wholly *secular* history is a contradiction of terms for it must hypostatize a motion, a direction without a point of reference. Thus the cult of Progress, (as substitute for the opium of the people.)

17.

The birthday of an "invention" is set by conditions too numerous and too involved with the whole animoid process ever to be one man's progeneration: but Progress needs animate heroes.

The idea that there was an inventor of printing, of the lever, wheel, gun, cooking, involves as point of reference a man without enough wit or skill to use tools. This by definition is not a man. Our ancestors noted foot-prints, read them as a message that some one had walked that way. Printing was invented the day a foot print was made deliberately. Can we conceive of such a "first?" Can we imagine a first for cooking?—fire poured out of the earth, down from the sky, cooked the fruit of the trees, animals. Basic mechanical inventions were all invented when Adam became conscious, and who he was before he was Adam does not concern us here.

In the ancient fable fire, the bow, the potter's wheel, were gifts of Gods and were gratefully received. In the modern fable the invention—steam engine, steam boat, rapid-fire weapons, airplanes, etc.—are gifts of mortal men but (saith the fable) the gifts are never appreciated. The "people" are ignorant, superstitious, unprogressive, they laugh at the inventor, throw stones at him, they try to smash his gift. But according to this standard fable the inventor is courageous, independent, and he knows his rights. He also knows what is best for the people, who, when it comes to new inventions have no rights.

The hero-inventor, working his life away in a leaky attic and only for the benefit of the people, lingers on in textbooks, the movies.

As the total group of mechanical prime movers spread, involving more and more men, conditioning them by direct collaboration, there were more and more inventors for each invention.

With the A Bomb, the individual hero-inventor is replaced by a group of unknown size—unknown even to itself. The collaboration of many specialists is essential. The A Bomb, we may say, was invented by Progress.

THE SOCIAL FORMAT

OCCASIONAL POETRY

I LOVE neighborhood ceremonies and I went with pleasure to the laying of the cornerstone of the John Lovejoy Elliott Houses around the block. But the third-rate band of the Sanitation Department (the unofficial ranking of occasions is 1. Police band, 2. Fire band, 3. Sanitation band) played perfunctorily; Mayor O'Dwyer came late, left in haste, and his few remarks were ill-concealed time-serving; there was no poetry and no new score like Beethoven's *Dedication of the House.* So that, as is usual with intellectual artists with sociable interests, I had to occupy my spirit with satirical observations: O'Dwyer's offhand gesture of greeting to the crowd after shaking hands with the top-hats on the platform, an over-familiar gesture that would have been insulting if one could not sense in it habitual fear and (I think) a little shame; or the fact that the cornerstone is put into the completed building like a false tooth, it is no foundation-stone nor is it "the capital of the pillar." Most important, of course, assaying the rather ugly houses themselves, the object of it all, concerning whose architectural plans and social policies I had already had far too many melancholy thoughts.

Now Goethe held, truly, that Occasional Poetry is the highest kind: the use-music that serves coronations and weddings, mourning, rites and feasts, anniversaries, and the giving of prizes to culture-heroes. The poetry not only decorates these events but heightens them. It proves their importance by interpreting it universally; it formalizes the passions and interests involved; it endures to memorialize a great moment. All art is the wilful immortality of the artist (Rank:) but this art has the great advantage for the artist that he releases that part of his deep energy that is shared and approved by all; his art-guilt is lessened, his art-joy is redoubled. Further, he directly gives, and is paid for, just the service at which he is excellent in the general mutual aid. So the social group is advantaged, the artist speaks with a more confident voice, there is no difficulty of communication because it is just from the shared unconscious that the images jangle forth.

The precondition for this gracious kind of poetry, however, is that there be in fact a community of sentiment deep enough for creativity and yet near enough to the surface and fitting enough to the ordinary mores to sing on a public occasion. Occasional poetry is a sign that the customary behavior is reasonably related to the spontaneous life. I think that this relation can be objectively studied in the social occasions themselves. Because the Elliott Houses are so little humane,—and this can be shown from the plans and policies—it was inevitable that the ceremony would be either colorless or falsely flashy (I return to the alternative below). We have then the kind of vicious circles that is familiar to radicals: an occasional poet can strengthen the sense of community if the sense of community is strong. But as Morris Cohen used

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to say, a circle is not vicious if it is big enough, because then there is plenty of room to maneuver and live on a little.

At present there is no occasional art. This does not prevent their being art and even socially important art, for the artist still draws on his deep energy and touches depths in others—but in a more combative and private way, not heightening the public functions. Now quite apart from the loss of personal satisfaction and happiness, I think we artists suffer a great technical loss in being deprived of the immediate social scene and functions. A loss in brilliance of color, communicable gayety and grief, immediate topical liveliness, everything that goes by the name of Showmanship. For example, compare a pompous court piece of Handel with a piece by Stravinsky that is equally loud and fast, or the eloquent sorrow of a Bach church-piece with I don't know what. I should agree that surface showmanship is not of the essence of art, but it is what makes for shared enthusiasm, the tingling of the spine, and the flush of glory. What I am saying is simply that immediate communicability does not depend on triviality of idea or treatment but on the fact that the common depths of artist and audience have an easy relation to the same ordinary scene and function.

What has become of showmanship? for it is instinctual (exhibition) and cannot disappear. A vast part of this beautiful energy has been cornered by advertising and ballyhoo. For example, supposing the laying of the Elliott cornerstone took place in the election year, then the ceremony would have been not colorless but flashy. It still would not have been occasional art, because the project would still have been inhumane and irrelevant to the common depths of the performing Mayor and his cynical public; but it would have been more expensive and might have been more exciting, especially because of the willed shared interest in the imitation election.

I am not a friend of advertising, but as a friend of art I must say that there is more inventive showmanship, in layout, calligraphy, musical setting, and almost in diction and syntax, dedicated to these stupid commodities, than poets dare to muster for the truths of the heart. These ads are our occasional poems, as the purchase and sale is our public occasion. It was interesting to see that even the last war (especially the last war) could not evoke anything so neat and shiny as the singing-commercial for Cresta Blanca Wine—a product, I hasten to add, that I do not buy, for I belong to that numerous wing of "free consumer's choice" that, by revulsion, avoids every brand that it has heard on the air.

Then the wonderful Occasional Poetry, that Goethe called the highest kind, has fallen apart into the following melancholy specialties: 1. honest art, without social pleasure for the creator or the audience, and often difficult to communicate; 2. inventive showmanship, largely cornered by advertisers and experts in public relations; 3. perfunctory Gebrauchsmusik, played by the Department of Sanitation.

PAUL GOODMAN

THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

MARIE OLSON IS GOING PLACES NOW! . . . During the war, Marie was a schoolgirl in Denmark. She worked with the underground, was caught and tormented by the Gestapo . . . Then, in March of 1946, she came to America. And here she began to believe in the American dream. Marie dreamed of being a model. But she weighed 147½ pounds; her figure, posture and grooming were poor, according to American standards. Then some one sent her to the DuBarry Success School . . . She learned . . . poise . . . a charming hair-do and a make-up with DuBarry Beauty preparations . . . She lost 29¼ pounds . . . A famous model agency has offered her a contract. "America," says Marie, "is heaven. The Success School has given me a new life." What about You? The Success School may well give *you* a new life, too.

—Advertisement in "The New Yorker" for the DuBarry Success School, 693 Fifth Ave., New York City.

POPULAR CULTURE

B.Y.O.O.L.

The Best Years Of Our Lives is about the easiest choice for the best picture of the year that any professional movie reviewer ever had. The picture is slick, warm, comfortable, full of pap, circular, familiar, and, above all, safe. If there ever was a "return to the womb," this is it.

Director William Wyler and Cameraman Gregg Toland here resume the association that has proved so profitable to Samuel Goldwyn in the past. These men know all the tricks, and their work is almost perfectly transparent here. The spectator is hardly aware of watching a movie, so well chosen are the viewpoints, the lighting, and the movements and gestures of the actors. After such a demonstration of Hollywood skill, most art-films seem cramped and crude (as Otis Ferguson remarked about French films: "they look as if they were photographed in somebody's cellar with a pocket Kodak.") Wyler and Toland and scenarist Robert Sherwood, expert carpenters that they are, have built a house of the best materials, the framing is solid, the lines are plumb and square, the grain of the wood is close and true, all the surfaces have a magnificent texture . . . but what architect designed this monstrosity?

Probably nobody did it deliberately. Goldwyn, scenting possibilities in the problems of the returning soldier, started the wheels by ordering a writer (McKinlay Kantor) to do something. After that, it must have been a question of eliminating and trimming and screening-out everything in bad (disagreeable) taste, everything insoluble, and everything genuinely disturbing. The result gives the impression of having been arrived at almost automatically, but once again, don't be disarmed. It takes years of practice and refinement, years of hard work to attain such confidence and craftsmanship, and it takes several million dollars to make a *BYOOL*. The Catholic Church is rich and loaded with experience; judging by its fruits, so is Hollywood. It is not a question of incompetence when this movie is studied, but of the extent that conservatism has grown and become entrenched in the film industry.

The theme is supposed to be the adjustment of returning servicemen; it soon becomes the adjustment of three carefully selected individuals in an American town, Boone City. These three heroes are solid characters, completely believable, endowed with human traits and actions. It is a pleasure to watch them. They are attractive in a natural way, nice guys with real difficulties, not beyond embarrassment at times, capable of making errors in personal judgment, open in likes and dislikes, honest, and momentarily interesting, just like Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* covers. None of them would discover a new idea in a century. We can assume that they are all convinced that all our troubles, although nagging and difficult, can be solved by "getting down to work," and that things will turn out all right, just the way their own personal tangles get fixed up.

BYOOL is a veritable mine of affirmations like this, and there isn't enough space to dig them out here, but it is valuable to compare it with previous examples of affirmation, in order to see what advances Hollywood has made. *Winterset* (1935), taken almost exactly from the play, had tacked onto it one of the phoniest of happy endings: the lovers, doomed to be killed by the dramatic logic of the story, are saved when Mio plays the street organ and thereby calls the cop, who saves them by arrest. *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town* (1936) has a situa-

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tion wherein Deeds wants to give 20 million dollars to buy land for the dispossessed unemployed, but the audience is diverted from this un-Rotarian course by the courtroom scene with its "pixillated" witnesses. *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington* (1939) pits the freshman Boy Scout Senator against a piece of log-rolling legislation, but instead of his being defeated, as would happen a thousand times out of a thousand in the U. S. Senate, he is saved by the last-minute confession of an old Senator (!) *Fury* (1936) and *They Won't Forget* (1937), both grim reminders that American life is less than perfect, have been withdrawn from circulation. *The Best Years Of Our Lives* makes none of these mistakes, but maintains interest throughout by the richness and variety of small, human situations and activities it contains, and by triumphantly evading any ideas on a large scale. Unimaginative to its roots, it constantly dissipates the tensions that get built up every few minutes. *Winterset, Mr. Deeds,* and *Mr. Smith* all got rolling into questions of larger scope, and had to be jerked back to complacency by grotesque means, but *BYOOL* was harnessed from the very beginning.

If *BYOOL* is supposed to represent a fair exposition of veteran's problems, it is a failure. The veterans who fought the election battle with guns in Athens, Tennessee, the veterans who can't get a place to live, the veterans who are being victimized by shady purveyors of education and job training under the GI Bill of Rights, and the Negro veterans who have come back to an intensified Jim Crow society are all living in a different world, a world that is almost completely unrelated to the comparatively pleasant town of Boone City, most of whose citizens are good hearted and obviously capable of adjusting their troubles in a few days, without even missing a meal. It is to the credit of Hollywood's moviemakers that they have attained the degree of skill required to create an illusion of reality from dream material (cf. "The Time the Lady Writer Imagined Me" by Dorothy McKenzie; POLITICS, August 1946). The one malcontent in Boone City is a lunatic America Firster, who is disposed of by the bombardier in the usual way, by a healthy sock on the jaw.

This suppressive treatment of the theme shapes the form of the film. It is a long series of comparatively short scenes, showing what happens to each of the three leading characters as they come back to Boone City. They fly there, meeting for the first time at the start of the flight, and talking over some of their feelings as they travel. After their arrival in Boone City, it becomes a matter of juggling the scenes cannily enough so that none of the three will lose his identity in the progress of the movie. They meet in a bar after the first harrowing day, and are drunkenly and excitedly glad to see each other. Then they meet in pairs at various times and places, and at last are re-united at the sailor's wedding, where everything ends on a happy note, with pleasant prospects for the future. All are now reasonably well adjusted, the theme is therefore exhausted, and the picture ends without any more ado.

For two hours and forty-five minutes this film goes on in its pedestrian way, very much like a group of related short subjects. It seems to have been made for people with short attention-spans. You can come in at any time, because what happens to the characters is superficial, obviating any lengthy building-up of motivations or moods, nor is it necessary to know what has gone before, since there is no large crisis (flood, battle, riot, rescue, etc.) The crises are all small. You get up and leave where you came in.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

OPEN CITY, the much-admired Italian film that has run over a year at the World Theatre in New York, is reminiscent of the French pictures of the 1930's. The characters move in the dim, hopeless filth of their semi-slum city districts, the atmosphere being further depressed by the complications of wartime: partially destroyed buildings, curfews, and shortages of food and clothing. It is this kind of realism that has always distinguished French films from Hollywood's exhibits, and here too the emphasis upon a genuine environment leads to characters whose appearance is almost always believable. However, this virtue in itself does not lead to anything cinematically significant.

In an ideal movie, ideas emerge by a carefully arranged association of visual images, and the spectator has the feeling that anything can happen next. Unfortunately, *Open City,* which is rigidly chronological, and whose points are all made in dialogue, lacks the necessary free-visual quality. For example, Manfredi's past is represented by only three bits of visual evidence: photographs in the Nazi's possession. The Nazi *says* that Manfredi is really an alias for Luigi Ferrara, an anti-fascist who was sentenced to jail for twelve years for treason in 1928, escaped in 1934, and fought for the Loyalists in Spain. In a movie these exciting, crucial and characteristic details have to be *shown.*

Obviously, to introduce flashbacks (one is worse than many) into a chronological story that is strictly limited to three consecutive days in Rome, would throw the whole thing out of gear, but one cannot avoid speculation about the nature of the medium, since *Open City* is a very dull and dead film for many long minutes, especially when the implications of its material are considered. Manfredi and the Nazi are both at the climactic moments of their lives when they meet face to face across the desk. We must assume that they represent the "mighty opposites" of these times, yet how ***can*** we assume this, how can we *know* it? What cinematic evidence is there to support what we are sure ought to be true?

Nothing. There is nothing except the characters themselves. That is the only evidence to support the venomous ideological hatred that is supposed to exist between the two men at that moment. It is just another cruel Nazi being heroically resisted by a brave-noble resister, and they are both clichés by now; painful caricatures of men, and we are given only the barest hints of their *esthetic* right to be the mighty opposites.

To take the Nazi first: the problem of making a Nazi real in films is seldom tackled at all. Fritz Lang gives him odious sophistication in manner (*Man Hunt*) or puts a figure of a panther on his desk (*Hangmen Also Die*), mainly to emphasize cruelty and intellectual inferiority. Occasionally a director will attempt the ideology by having his Nazi glance admiringly at a photograph of Hitler.

The resister is usually represented as determined, honest, loyal, compassionate, accomplished at outwitting the Gestapo, kind to women-children-animals, serious (yet with a sense of humor), not often smoking and seldom drinking, etc.

Both are fanatics, and they meet across the desk in numberless movies. The prime irony is that the medium so admirably equipped for associating them with contemporary ideologies has not yet dug into their backgrounds. We can assume that the Nazi and Manfredi have grown up in the misery and wreckage of the First War, and for twenty years they have been shaped and developed for the duel. The only way to get the full effect of the conflict is to "write history with lightning", as Woodrow Wilson characterized Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation.* It must be clear that this is not merely a conflict of personalities, yet that's all it is in *Open City* (and in practically all movies. One has the feeling that the movie Nazi and the movie democrat would start fighting on first sight in real life, no matter what the circumstances, simply because one is a bully and the other a Boy Scout).

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All the main characters in *Open City* are involved in this deadly ideological conflict, and any or all of them can avoid the consequences that come to them if they will "wait it out", collaborate, "be good sheep", etc. It follows that they are animated by some great faith, but how and why and where they have acquired the faith is only vaguely indicated, and, what is inexcusable in a movie, these very important motivations are not shown. The spectator has to pick them up by guesswork, implication and other hints, as well as his own experience as a member of movie audiences.

Don Pietro, the Partisan priest, is probably the most likable character in *Open City*, as well as the most fully developed, and is by far the most interesting to watch. Everything contributes to this: his attitude, bearing, gestures, the way he walks, and his bland, unsophisticated expression. However, is it enough for him to say, in explanation of his Partisanship, "It is my duty to help those in need", when we know that Partisan priests are rare creatures? We want to know how he got that way, and to make his unusual activities significant in the film would require more of the "historical lightning".

The strongest demonstration of this film's "unhistorical" character can be made by comparison with Russian pictures of 1925-1928, where the spectator is forced to recognize the characters in their cultural, moral, economic and social environments (to say nothing of the political climate!). In one section of Pudovkin's *The End of St. Petersburg*, the actions of the hero are interspersed with impersonal war scenes of all kinds, and the sequence is so brilliantly and powerfully arranged that the hero is revealed to be at once an individual and a part of the mass. It is this quality that is so sadly lacking in *Open City*. It is the picture's worst defect, since all the characters are shown only as individuals. Don Pietro asks the deserter where he has been, and the man answers, "Cassino . . . an inferno . . ." The shot of the character is more real than his words, and the only thing that could balance the picture of the man is a picture of the inferno too.

Perhaps this reliance upon words is the prime fault of motion pictures to-day. Nothing that an actor says in movies has even a small fraction of the validity possessed by visual images (this is one of the first steps to be learned about the nature of the medium), and since practically all "ideas" in *Open City* are in words, the intellectual content is submerged by what is shown on the screen. Shot after shot is nothing more than a portrait of an actor talking, and cinematically dull as they are, the pictures still rob the spoken words of much of their value.

What makes *Open City* doubly disappointing is that its material is top-notch. Its makers have attempted to present some of the most horrible troubles of these times, both physical and moral, and have approached their theme in a sincere manner that is rare in other pictures to-day. In the process, however, they have failed to work out a form of expression adequate to carry out that theme.

CIGARETTES
$1.45 ALL POPULAR BRANDS NO OTHER COSTS
PER CARTON
Minimum order 3 cartons
Perfect delivery guaranteed
Send check or money order to
ACE MAIL ORDER CO.
East Orange 5 N. J.

There *is* one fine bit at the very end. At various places throughout the film, a group of young boys is shown plotting and carrying out sabotage. After Don Pietro is shot, the camera shows the children watching in grief through the wire fence, then a final shot shows them walking slowly down the hill from the execution-place, and as they pass, the camera pans to the right to include a full shot of the city. This coda, so superior to the rest of the film in timing and visual expression, so full of poignancy and ironic overtones, is not just an added touch to something good. It is a bit of true movie making a clumsy film seem worse.

THE MALRAUX FILM

Man's Hope is the work of André Malraux. It is based on that political insurgent's novel of the same title, and made almost at the same time (1938). It is directly opposed to *BYOOL* in many ways, the most striking of which is its non-professional character. This film was made almost on the battlefield, in the vicinity of Barcelona. There are several episodes leading up to the main event: the bombing of a hidden Franco airfield in the vicinity of Teruel.

The style is naturalistic, which is the style of practically all talking films. The function of the camera is to record as many scenes as can be accommodated in the finished picture, and it follows that more than 95% of the characters and events in the book have to be left out. Thus the panorama, the main feature of an epic, disappears from *Man's Hope* when it is transformed into a film. The ironic fact is that the movie medium is almost ideally suited to panorama, and what *Man's Hope* could have been in the hands of a genius is tempting to consider.

The hypothetical genius, knowing the capacity of his camera to go anywhere and to show anything; knowing, above all, that the time-and-space limits are Spain in the middle of a couple of years of civil war, would consider himself under no obligation to cut his panorama down to twenty characters and half a dozen events. The thing to cut is the time that a shot exists on the screen. What is significant about one character and his part in one event can often be realized in two or three seconds, and it is a mistake to let him "live" on the screen any longer than that, for other characters and other events are crowding in, demanding to be shown. This is a big idea, a tremendous theme of a nation in turmoil, a flood of action, whirlpools of emotion. The film genius would make the several thousand necessary shots, arrange them to fit his conception of the theme, and then perhaps *Man's Hope* would emerge in epic grandeur.

Malraux is not a film genius. If he were, he would not have made *Man's Hope* as he did, relying heavily on dialogue to express ideas, being forced to imitate the structure of scenes in his novel and thus to omit almost all of it. The film is poverty-stricken compared to the book, and its hundred minutes or so make it far too long (our genius, thinking in terms of film only, would compress Malraux's picture to ten minutes).

The bombing sequence, which is the heart of the picture, is a series of routine shots of a bombing expedition. Only one thing prevents its being forgotten practically on sight, and this is the character of the peasant who is the guide to the target. He has lived his life in the village and knows every square foot of the area, but he has never been in an airplane, and his whole world is changed. He is in an agony of bewilderment as the unfamiliar landscape spreads out below, until at last he recognizes the field, and then he becomes the embodiment of relief and joy. This is the point that Malraux is making throughout the film, or at least one aspect of the point: the peasants are becoming politically conscious. In the process, the

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film gets pulled out of shape, because the bombing sequence turns out to have been too big a setting for such a tiny jewel. It could and should have been done more economically. The waste of time and incident is typical of the unimaginative naturalistic film style, especially in movies that are picturizations of prose writing. In the book Malraux *also* gave the thoughts and hopes and feelings of the regular crew members; in the film only the peasant comes through. What works for the writer fails for the moviemaker; the two media are not compatible.

The picture ends with a much larger working-out of the point about political consciousness. It is necessary to rescue the crashed fliers, so another sequence is developed: the activities of the commanding officer, the climb in the mountains, the bringing-down of the dead and injured. Like the bombing sequence, it is more prose until the very end, dull and without any movement (although there is enough activity and incidents for a hundred pages of writing). One wishes that the camera would get going in its own peculiar way. We follow the officer as he observes the progress of the stretchers, we must wait while he talks with various people involved in the operation. It is all supposed to be very significant, but it is cinematically dead.

It is boredom until the camera breaks loose. The procession, slow and funereal, approaches a village perched on the slopes of the sierra. Then, seemingly miraculously, the people of the village are seen waiting as the procession approaches, gathering to pay homage to the fliers. This is where the film changes from prose-time to cinema-time, no longer chronological, but with the shots arranged according to their values in revealing this larger aspect of the theme. Shots are *repeated*, and emotional tension is developed because the audience is taken out of normal time, not knowing what shot will come next, a new one or a repeat. At last the sequence is given cinematic importance. It is made clear that one is seeing not what one wants to see or expects to see, but what the *director* wants one to see. As at the end of *Open City*, here is a brief bit that underlines the inadequacy of the bulk of the picture that has gone before.

It is at this point that Malraux, the non-professional, surpasses William Wyler, whose skill has been highly developed over a period of many years. Wyler apparently feels no compulsion to do more than his job of making inconsequential material momentarily interesting. Malraux, perhaps in desperation, has leaped cleanly over Wyler's head.

GEORGE BARBAROW

PERIODICALS

The New Republic, December 16, 1946, to date. HENRY WALLACE, Editor.

THE style of America's liberal journals is a proper vehicle for the expression of their thought; as with all styles, there is an integral relationship between it and the ideas it bears. The internal trepidation; the attempt to walk tightropes long ago slackened or cut; the "liblab" double standard towards Stalinist Russia and the capitalist democracies; the yearning for gentility, reasonableness and folksiness—these characteristics of liberal journalism are among the causes for its lamentable style. Result: frequent equivocal and leave-the-door-open sentences (*it is not unlikely, it seems, perhaps, it is to be regretted*, and above all, *it is to be hoped*); and the jargonesque adaptation of sociological and psychological cliches (*compulsion, submarginal, mores, adaptation*, etc.)

To this add the low-brow folksy posturings of a populist journal (cf., *The Progressive*) and the capsulizing, English-twisting, high-speed, omniscent-reporter approach of *Time*—and you have the new *New Republic*, HENRY WALLACE, EDITOR. Nothing quite like it has been around in a long time. Whether by deliberate malice or not, it is an extraordinary compilation of what is bad in most varieties of contemporary journalism. But what is even more extraordinary, it has none of the occasional compensations of those varieties.

It has dropped the topical paragraph comments usually run by political weeklies and substituted several pages of selected news items. These are written by hacks apparently trained in the *Time* chain-gang. But somehow none of *Time's* crispness and cleverness is captured; the result is simply dull rewriting in a grey slack prose. (The opening sentence of the December 30 issue is a horrible example of journalistic cliches: "The White House crew worked feverishly to trim the sails of the ship of state against the gathering gale of a Republican Congress." Yes, yes, and we are told about the Skipper too.)

Editorial comment is now largely supplied by "Henry Wallace's Forum." I don't wish to duplicate what appears elsewhere in this magazine, but I must at least say that Wallace seems to me the most boring and humorless egomaniac on the American political scene since William Jennings Bryan. Who else would dare to write: "My field is the world. My strength is my conviction that a progressive America can unify the world and a reactionary America must divide it. My enemy is blind reaction . . . My friends are all who believe in true democracy. My master is the common man . . . I seek no personal gains . . . If I have importance it is because of the ideas that I have come to represent . . ."

Of course, Wallace is right in there pitching with platitudes of his own: "To attain industrial peace we must first of all pay a spiritual price. In our collective bargaining, both industry and labor must give up the law of the jungle . . . No matter what our nominal faith may be, we can all believe in the religion of the general welfare and the Golden Rule."

I have read most of the articles (no one can read *all* of Ralph Martin!) in the magazine these last two months but I have difficulty in summoning a recollection of any of them. The learned contributions of two political thinkers, Frank Sinatra and Billy Rose, do stand out, that of the latter having had an especially cheering affect because of his promise there will be no depression, which is merely a fantasy of dyspeptic radical professors. I was also impressed by a series on Russia By The Editors justifying Stalinist imperialism on the ground that Russia was not given her "just due" after the first world war . . .

Well, there's no getting around it; I have to say something about Ralph Martin, The Schmaltz Man. Martin has been leaving trails of verbal goo all over the country; he writes syrupy-sweet sketches about Good People Everywhere, which make one wonder how he missed the Daily Worker in the Popular Front days when it rhapsodized The People. Special mention is due Martin's interview with a vocational psychiatrist in Peoria, Illinois, who finds that his most difficult patients are the intelligent minority among returning veterans, "The Plus People." (I imagine that the *New Republic*, HENRY WALLACE, EDITOR, feels just about the same way.)

The Book Section of the magazine which once had some interest has been so sadly destroyed that all of its previous contributors seem, by implicit agreement, to have abandoned it. Wallace, who probably doesn't know Kafka from Tris Speaker, dislikes "arty" reviews, so now reviewers merely "tell the story" and append a few trite comments. (Wallace

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is obviously missing his bet: Orville Prescott or Sterling North would make such a Distinguished Book Editor!) But it is sad, nonetheless, that one of the very few places where serious reviewing was occasionally tolerated, is now in the hands of Philistia.

The most interesting feature of the pre-Wallace days is also gone: Manny Farber's movie criticism. Farber was one of the two or three people in this country who wrote consistently intelligent film reviews. He lasted for a few weeks after Wallace took over, though his copy was obviously given a workout by Wallace's Senior Editors, and then he quit. He has been replaced by one Shirley O'Hara who finds Fannie Hurst's "Humoresque" "one of the best movies I've ever seen." (Bet it makes Henry shed a bashful tear too.)

Before we end this sad recital, a word about the art work. The new editors have resurrected a cartoon style popular in the days of the Tweed Gang; they seem oblivious to the conception that the cartoon is a medium which depends for its graphic vividness on strong, simple lines. The cartoons now printed are ornate, heavy, blurred—in keeping with the tone and taste of the magazine. They are further handicapped by the use of color, which is alien to the cartoon medium. (One issue did, however, achieve an impressive nightmarish effect: heavy moody green imposed on a fuzz of ghoulish drawings.) Even Detje's maps, so clear when they appeared in PM, are now obscured by the ornateness imposed on him by the magazine's style.

And that, dear readers, is The New Republic, HENRY WALLACE, EDITOR.

P.S. The magazine now prints a farm column by Angus McDonald.

THEODORE DRYDEN

BOOKS

PEARL HARBOR. By George Morgenstern. Devin-Adair. $3.

In this volume, Mr. Morgenstern documents a thesis, using quotations from the official records of the various Pearl Harbor investigations, and other semi-official records. As Mr. Morgenstern assembles the record the responsibility, both for the events that led to the Japanese attack, and the extent of the disaster, rests with the "Big Nine", a group of Washington policy makers representing both civil and military branches of the government under the direct leadership of Mr. Roosevelt. The war with Japan, as Mr. Morgenstern records it, was caused by the political, economic and financial maneuvers of Mr. Roosevelt's government undertaken as part of a program of help to Britain, Holland and France. The disaster was severe because Washington, although it had full access to the Japanese codes and so knew that an attack was expected, failed to share this information with the field command.

If this were a rational universe this book would be compulsory reading in all American high schools with teams debating the issues, and referring back to the original documents to test whether Mr. Morgenstern has correctly reported or has instead distorted the record. If the club women of America should follow the same program it would help them decide whether or not General Marshall—one of the big nine—is a sensible Secretary of State. Similar debates over the radio might have considerable utility in clarifying some of the basic contradictions that make life hard for "peace-loving" peoples.

This is not, however, a rational universe. Since Mr. Morgenstern, unhappily, is on the staff of *The Chicago Tribune,* it will be easy to dismiss this volume as merely a compilation of carefully distorted quotations extracted from context in order to document the *Tribune's* ancient feud against George the III. Those who assert this opinion, however, should prove their sincerity by documenting a contrary thesis from the same records in a statement half as well collated as this one.

HELEN MEARS

THIEVES IN THE NIGHT. By Arthur Koestler. Macmillan. $3.

1.

IT IS already commonplace to say that answers to the great problems facing the individual in society and, indeed, the whole human race, often raise more questions, and often questions of a more complex nature, than those which they attempt to set at rest. Arthur Koestler's "solution" to the Palestine problem does just this. The reference is, of course, to the solution he offers in his book *Thieves in the Night.*

Up to this point Koestler has always exercised the greatest caution, he has displayed almost a shyness as far as giving answers has been concerned. No one can come away from any of his earlier books and say that this is Koestler's position, this is what Koestler would do under this or that circumstance. He has left the reader with a great deal of insight into the dilemma of the intellectual in his time, he has schooled him to think in terms of personal morality, and he has taught him to distrust the voice within all of us which "whispers into our ear the gentle lie that we shall never die, and that tomorrow will be like yesterday." But he has never claimed to have pondered through the imponderable. Some of his readers have condemned him for the frustrations he has caused them. They have failed to recognize that Koestler's primary function, until just recently, was simply to state the problem. At this stage of history, this is a prerequisite function of the serious writing intellectual. After he wrote in *The Yogi and the Commissar,* "I wish one could still write an honest infrared novel without an ultra-violet ending," it is to Koestler's credit that he never succumbed to the temptation. Intellectual dilletantes come to their Koestlers, their Orwells, their Macdonalds, et al, for bread, ready-baked bakery bread at that; they receive only stones. It is all they should receive. Everyone must solve his own problem.

Now Koestler suddenly confronts his readers with a pat formula for solving one of the most pressing problems of our time. This is plainly a departure from the critical technique he so carefully, laboriously, and honestly worked out. Nor is this his only departure from the Koestler who has risen during the decade just past as one of the foremost translators of fundamentals; the very nature of the formula he offers is foreign to all that he has written before.

Koestler takes great pains to state the various points of view from which the Palestine issue may be surveyed. The statement by Kamel Effendi, an Arab moderate, has already been quoted widely and will no doubt, live as long as conflict rages in the Middle East:

"I care not whether you pay. And I care not for their hospitals and their schools. This is our country, you understand? We want no foreign benefactors. We want not to be patronised. We want to be left alone, you understand! We want to live our own way and we want no foreign teachers and no foreign money and no foreign habits and no smiles of condescension and no pat on the shoulder and no arrogance and no shameless women with wriggling buttocks in our holy

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places. We want not their honey and we want not their sting, you understand? Neither their honey nor their sting. This you can tell them in your America. If they are thrown out in other countries—very bad, very sorry. Very, very sorry—but not our business. If they want to come here—a few of them, maybe thousand, maybe two thousand—*t'faddal*, welcome. But then know you are guests and know how to behave. Otherwise—to the devil. Into the sea—and *hallass*, finished. This is plain language. You tell them."

Koestler's definition of the British Assistant Chief Commissioner succeeds in summing up in a very few pages the whole temperament and predilection of the British colonial administrator. Beyond that, Koestler digs beneath the obvious and main currents of struggle in Palestine. He states, though probably not to the satisfaction of Dr. Magnes, the position of some Jewish moderates, and, though probably not to the satisfaction of the Halutzim (the socialist pioneer farmers of Palestine), the position of the Halutzim; he even brings in an "impartial" hard-boiled American reporter (whose Americanese is a little obvious) who is converted to the Zionist cause by the heroic struggle of the "Hebrews" and by such innovations as Hadassah Hospitals and Haifa Technions.

However well the story is told, it is, of course, impossible to consider it without taking into account the conclusion to which it is finally forced. The ideology on which Koestler insists is Jewish terrorism. Here is Koestler's arrival in the camp of the nihilists, his point of departure from that of the moralists.

Recently Koestler wrote as follows:

". . . John Lewis contributes one more fallacy to the apparently so abstract, in truth so hellishly practical, Ends and Means discussion. He cites Professor Field's *Moral Theory*: 'to call the means by which good is achieved *evil* is meaningless "because if good comes of it, and it was done with that intention it cannot be evil".' The means are therefore morally neutral, and the (future) outcome alone will show whether it was a good or bad thing to deport hundreds of thousands of Poles or sterilize all Jews. If at this price the war can be won or future wars avoided, then the end is good and the means cannot be evil. But even if we granted that such grandiose surgical operations on humanity were permissible if the positive results were *guaranteed*, such certainty is never available when far-reaching practical decisions have to be taken. The majority of Nazi rank and file, of Fascists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, Falangists, Trotskyists, and Stalinists were convinced that the end they were fighting and dying for was *good*, and that therefore the means, 'if done with that intention, can not be evil.' Hence Munich, Stalin-Hitler Pact, gas-chambers, deportations, purges, atom bombs—all done with the best of intentions." (*New Statesman and Nation*, July 6, 1946.)

To bring the relevance of the above statement to *Thieves in the Night* into sharp focus all one has to do is to add to Koestler's last sentence, to the crimes he lists, the "solution" to the Palestine problem his book advocates: Jewish terrorism. The situation in Palestine demands that "far-reaching practical decisions" be taken. Koestler points out correctly that in such situations positive results cannot be guaranteed. By Koestler's own logic, therefore, it follows that terrorism, even though it be Jewish and committed with the best of intentions, is evil. The Jewish extremist may insist, as does the current Koestler, that he is ". . . too weary to argue about Ends and Means . . ." and that ". . . In the logic of the ice age tolerance became a luxury and purity a vice." If he does so argue, he will have reduced himself to the level of humanity of his enemies.

Koestler has trapped himself on the moral plane. In a world insensitive to tragedy, his defeat, the decline of one of the few remaining rational voices, is in itself a tragedy. Some will perhaps consider it a saving grace that Koestler fails to develop logically his new position. It is not that! When an author who has devoted pages and pages to the Ends and Means discussion (which he himself deems "so hellishly practical") negates all his work by simply stating that morality is a luxury, when an ardent internationalist dismisses the question of nationalism by simply saying "nonsense," this cannot be a saving grace. Perhaps nationalism is nonsense, perhaps morality a luxury, but is this the way to these conclusions?

JOSEPH WEIZENBAUM

2.

THE importance of Koestler's *Thieves in the Night* lies not in its description of the practice and problems of Zionism, though perhaps Koestler himself may think it does. Its relevance consists in the author's ability to deal with the contemporary dilemmas of social life using Zionism as a specific case. And Koestler's strength, namely his sensitivity to the moral issues of the day, is sometimes exactly counterbalanced by his lack of awareness of the implications of what he is saying. But at least he probes. Let us see if we cannot probe Koestler's book to a deeper level than he has himself.

1.

The outstanding fact about the central character of the book, Joseph, is that he is constantly searching for his people, or as we say, for a pattern of life into which he can integrate. But the truth is, he is rootless. All his attempts at integration end as failures. He cannot be an Englishman, nor can he be a Jew. He hasn't any people. Nor is it a matter of a particular girl in a particular commune that causes this isolation. Koestler implicitly and unconsciously (I think) takes this non-integrability of Joseph's for granted by not having him go to another commune to try again. What's the use of trying to become a part of the collective farm life anyhow, is Joseph's real premise. The only person with whom Joseph is able to establish any emotional rapport, Dina, is like himself, a person unable to integrate. (Unfortunately, Koestler always poses the problem in sexual terms which I submit again shows how unconscious he is of the problem as a whole.)

Well, why can't he integrate somewhere, the annoyed reader soon asks? The Marxist would have a readymade answer in the petty-bourgeois nature of Zionism and of Joseph in particular (his demand for privacy, his poetry translations, and even his job as artisan cobbler rather than agriculturist). The Freudian would demand he be psychoanalyzed to overcome his maladjustments. But the fact is that it is because Joseph is too conscious of social life as a phenomenon in itself that he cannot be completely absorbed by it. He is not merely a participant but also an observer. He is not only subjectively involved but also objectively detached. He can never integrate anywhere because the development of his consciousness has already propelled him out of the simple, naive world "in which one is brought up". One learns to be an Arab, or a Jew, or a Britisher from childhood on, and consequently by the time one is adult, lo, the miracle is accomplished—one is an Arab or etc. But Joseph has surpassed the limits of any particular historic existence. Consequently, he sees the limitations of being a Britisher and of being a Jew. He sees, tho dimly, the limitations inherent in all patterns, inevitable in all ways of life. He hated the Yid but he couldn't abide the new Tarzans of Galilee either. He is not sure at all that any kind of progress has been achieved.

Nor is he sure that the replacement of the Arab way of life, filthy and barbarous as it is, by industrialization and efficiency is a real gain. (Be it noted, it is not the replacement of Arabs by Jews, for everyone admits that industrialization would enable more Jews *and* more Arabs to inhabit Palestine

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but the replacement of Arabian mores by those of Western man.) In short poor Joseph is caught in the fundamental problem of values. All patterns have their advantages and disadvantages, and all are limited even as man himself is finite. No one pattern can develop all human potentialities but each elaborates a particular possibility. And History is possible only because man is not merely historical.

Furthermore it is very dubious whether it is possible to integrate on a self-conscious level, at all. For such self-consciousness is necessarily linked with objectivity and detachedness. At the most Joseph could *conform* to a pattern but he could never really integrate into one in the sense of fully and unconditionally accepting it. But, after all, the commune leaders only require that Joseph conform. (Marry the girl, even if you don't love her.) To be accepted he need only compromise on one little point, and Koestler's forte has always been his handling of these capitulation scenes. (Thus the command, "marry the girl", and when he finally accedes, the ironic concession on the part of the commune, "But you need only live with her on weekends, for we are giving you a job in town during the week.")

2.

One of the main sources of contemporary paranoia is the realization more or less consciously that it is no longer possible to fully integrate into social forms—particularly into any *existing* social forms. This expresses itself in our realization that we live in historical time, in a particular here and now as individuals. At best one can conform in varying degrees, and in general that is all that is required ordinarily of a social being. Hence the feeling of guilt and insecurity; for the individual is only too painfully aware that he has merely conformed. How long can this precarious fraud last, this both being and not being a part of the social realm? And worse yet, is there no way at least in the future thru some social "improvements and reforms" to overcome the split between the merely social man and that aspect of man that is supra-historical? Will we always be homeless because the social antitheses (such as freedom and the area of the determined, democracy and the phenomenon of stratification, subjective involvement and objective detachment, etc.) are fundamentally not capable of a permanent synthesis? Are we not inescapably led to a concept that the nature of man is such that he lives on two levels which no social form can ever reconcile?

It is characteristic that when Joseph self-consciously verbalizes to himself he talks in terms of seeking self-respect but he never investigates what constitutes the basis of this. In general the phenomenon of self-respect is a response to social approval and to the extent that the self is a socially-constituted entity, self-respect can be gained only through the channels of social support (i.e. by being successful in terms of that particular society). But to the extent that the self is not socially constituted—or rather surpasses the social—then self-respect can be gained only in precisely the opposite way, by refusing to consider social approval, which may or may not be forthcoming. The Minority which for various reasons cannot find its self-respect in terms of the Majority's social scheme generally attempts to set itself up as another society. Its members can now achieve self-respect in terms of the Minority's scheme of affairs. Or rather, most can. For after a while, the Minority pattern, being limited, gives rise to its own minority. In fact Joseph may be conveniently described as the symbol of the perennial Left Opposition, forever waiting for "the integument to burst asunder."

But since he does not understand the process, he is defeated by it. Consequently he falls into the error of choosing Death disguised as Life. For actually his acceptance of terrorism amounts only to this. Joseph cannot integrate or conform completely to any life-pattern; and to spare himself this awareness and its implications, he can only choose to die, to seek self-respect thru annihilation. His choice of death is thus disguised as an affirmation of life (i.e. as support of Zionism). This is the oldest trick in the game altho it seems to have succeeded in confusing Koestler, too, for his book is dedicated to Jabotinsky, the exponent of terrorism.

To its credit, Christianity posed the problem—"What does it profit a man to gain the world and lose his soul?" and answered in the negative. And in the current atmosphere of justifiable despair, we must pose the problem in its other aspect, "What does it profit a man to gain his soul and lose the world?" Let us hope that despite our realization of the limitations of social existence in any form, we still have the strength to answer in the negative again.

HELEN CONSTAS

Man IS the Root

DWIGHT Macdonald's incisive analysis of contemporary politics, *The Root Is Man*, has been given a pretty thorough going-over in these pages in recent months. The criticisms of his diagnosis which have been made by the "Progressives"—especially the Socialists and the Trotskyists—have been in reality spirited defenses of their own doctrines. Macdonald's own prognosis ("anarchism and pacifism provide the best leads . . . for a new concept of revolutionary and socialist politics") has been characterized as "escapism".

Although we are inclined to accept Macdonald's diagnosis, and are prepared to go along with him almost all the way in our practical day-to-day activities, we regard his own theoretical position as untenable: (1) We reject his acceptance of absolute ethical values; in the light of his own position, that which is "unattainable" cannot possibly be known to exist. (2) Assuming that absolute ethical values do exist, we doubt very much whether most people are at all concerned about them. (3) Because of this, we believe that the Hobbesian view of human nature is at least as tenable as the view of Rousseau, upon which the doctrine of anarchism is postulated, and for which Macdonald argues.

Man may be capable of kindness, cooperation and mutual aid, as the anarchists assert. But it is man who is also cruel, who oppresses and exploits, who closes his eyes to evil, who rationalizes injustice, who justifies greed! Because he possesses these traits, his leaders find it possible to rationalize class and group self-interest and precipitate him into bloody wars which he aggressively fights, and for which at no time will he accept responsibility or admit guilt. Two world wars found millions of people actively participating with clear consciences, all equally convinced that they were engaged in a just and holy war of self-preservation. The only thing defeat has taught the vanquished is that they had better put up a more effective fight the next time! War is not fascism, capitalism, or communism! War is man! The knaves lead, the fools fight, and the dissenting few are caught in the squeeze.

POLITICS readers need not be told that anarchist doctrines are by no means new. The writings of prominent anarchists—those reprinted in POLITICS, for example—go back many years. Yet the past failures of anarchism are undeniable. The revolutionary Spanish anarchists are a case in point. They were a potent force until the Spanish Civil War, when anarchism could neither establish nor maintain itself in the light of the realities of man's nature and the struggle for power. The main battle for control was between fascism and Stalinism, neither of which had any ethical scruples nor any *a priori* concepts of man's goodness. The anarchists were lost in the shuffle.

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One should not conclude from this brief analysis that anarchism is an undesirable doctrine. Far from it! The anarchist ideals and goals are very desirable; the failure is not because anarchists are wrong but rather because its doctrines are incompatible with human beings as they are. And there is no evidence that man's nature is likely to change or that anarchism will be any more successful in the future.

II

But, we are asked, after one repudiates the political philosophies of liberalism, Marxism and anarchism, the Rousseauan conception of human nature, and the doctrine of absolute ethical values, what can one believe? Joseph Wood Krutch attempted to answer this question some years ago in a book which deserves to be rescued from the obscurity into which it has fallen. Even as Macdonald has demonstrated the bankruptcy of messianic liberalism and Marxism, Krutch has shown that one can hope for nothing from the traditional intellectual beliefs of the middle class.

Krutch's brilliant study and confession, written during the golden age of Hoover prosperity, describes what he calls *The Modern Temper*—"the mood generated in me by the intellectual convictions current in my time". The mood is essentially one of disillusionment and despair. Man, says Krutch, does not live by bread alone; he also lives by "values" which give his life meaning, purpose and significance. Unfortunately it is no longer possible to accept the values which made life meaningful to other generations. These values have long since become illusions.

Copernicus, Darwin and others have remade man's physical world. His intellect accepts freedom from "teleological delusions", but his emotional self cannot believe that the universe is utterly indifferent to man and his activities.

Krutch dismisses science, love, art and metaphysics; they are all fatal illusions. Science has been greatly overrated. It has increased man's knowledge and power, but has not added one whit to his happiness. Similarly, the Victorian concept of love as the supreme value no longer has validity. "God does not care so much about it as we had formerly been led to suppose; but neither, as a result, do we. Love is becoming gradually so accessible, so unmysterious, and so free that its value is trivial." If all these values are swept away, what is left to provide a driving force for man's thinking and living?

Although he shared neither their beliefs nor their hopes, Krutch acknowledged (in 1929) that one had to turn to the extreme Left—the Communists—to find the basis for seemingly enduring values and an acceptable faith. Communists are buoyant, enthusiastic and optimistic, like all primitive people, because there is a task to be done—transforming a dormant, semi-feudal, agricultural society into a dynamic, industrial nation. Under the circumstances, "there is little temptation to ask ultimate questions as long as there are many tangible things to do and plenty of energy to do them with".

In spite of all this, Krutch believed that even Communists would be unable to escape the dilemma in which the intellectuals of Western civilization found themselves. If the Communist experiment failed, he argued, those who espoused communism would lose their sustaining value; on the other hand, if it succeeded, then Communists, too, would ultimately suffer the moral let-down of Western civilization. They, too, would be compelled to seek new values; they, too, would "come to realize that the natural universe is as imperfectly adapted as ever to human needs". But even Krutch did not realize how quickly the bitter experiences of many Marxists would convince them that Stalinists, Trotskyists and Socialists, no less than Capitalists, are unable to create a better society.

On the basis of his entire analysis, Krutch reluctantly concluded that "any question concerning the meaning of life is in itself completely meaningless", and that "living is merely a physiological process with only a physiological meaning and that it is most satisfactorily conducted by creatures who never feel the need to attempt to give it any other".

Despite his attack upon Progressives, Macdonald himself is a hopeful Radical—hopeful that even if he cannot give a blueprint for the new society, he can at least indicate its direction. Krutch, on the other hand, holds out no hope for anything better; he has given up the search; he is resigned to live his life as best he can, in his own frame of reference, with his own personal values, in a world which will probably continue to remain very much as it is for a long time to come.

And so when Macdonald's new political vocabulary divides our political contemporaries into Progressives and Radicals, we who hold with Krutch demur. We've been omitted. We're Political Pessimists! We have no illusions about our ability to create a better world; we doubt that men have learned the lessons of the past, that they can organize their political, economic and social activities without continually coming into open hostilities with each other.

III

But where does all this leave us? If we reject the Progressive and the Radical approaches, and abandon all hope, must we head for the nearest bridge? Hardly. Despite our disenchantment, and despite the limitations which the outside world places upon us, we, no less than Macdonald, can try to live reasonable, happy and useful lives, each in his own way, measured by his own yardstick.

But let us not deceive ourselves. Whether we like it or not, we—and Macdonald—will continue to remain insignificant in number and in influence, because our fellow-men are going to pass us by. We are hopelessly out of tune with their world and their ways of thinking and acting. We don't share their values, or lack of values; we don't talk their language. Our devastating criticism of their *mores*, and our inability to offer something which is acceptable to them, dooms us to continued insignificance. These people, who govern the state, turn the wheels of industry, fight the nation's wars, and beget, rear and educate the coming generations, are neither critical nor skeptical. They desperately want something to hold on to. They want a clear and forthright statement of faith; they want to believe in a better world; they want to hope that the United Nations Organization can prevent war.

Despite our excitement about the atom bomb, or about World War III, there is nothing we are going to be able to do about them. This dismal thought should not in any way deter us from standing by our convictions, nor from calling most of our politicians the knaves that they are. We can still turn our backs on their dishonest schemes for saving the world from another holocaust. We, too, no less than Macdonald, can send food packages to help feed Europe's hungry and starving; we, too, can ask for amnesty for imprisoned conscientious objectors; we, too, can protest lynch terror and the judicial railroading of innocent Negroes.

But, if we conclude that man's problems are too complex for him to cope with, if the good life is always out of reach, if absolute ethical values ought to exist but apparently do not, if man himself seems to be the greatest obstacle to social reconstruction, if society rids itself of one evil only to succumb to another, if even those who espouse anarchism can't do so without a good measure of skepticism and cynicism, then perhaps we had better say that Krutch is right, and retreat to our political ivory tower.

J. Alvarez Del Vayo, stalwart Progressive, recently said, "If the post-war philosophers are too weak to fight the hard battles that lie ahead, they should stay away from politics and surrender their claim to leadership."

This is precisely what some of us intend to do.

WILLIAM ISAACS AND JULES KOLODNY

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WHAT WAS BEHIND THE COAL STRIKE—HAM ACTING OR HAM?

Sir:

I hope that I am not the only reader of POLITICS who violently disagrees with Dwight Macdonald's article, last issue, on the coal strike.

First of all, it seems to me that the polemic against the imaginary Man from Marx was neither fair nor serious. It starts introducing the Marxist as a man so much preoccupied with the ripeness of economic conditions for socialism, that he has no inkling about what happens on the economic front of labor. This is—even an adversary of Marxism must admit—not a typical Marxist attitude. Whatever you may object to Marxist methods you certainly cannot say that Marxist economists ignore wage struggles.

I first thought that this was just a polemical slip. But the whole article goes on like that. Macdonald makes the Marxist first guess that the miners "acted under the spur of economic necessity" being "the lowest-paid of all workers." Then he refutes him, stating that the miners are "the second best paid of all vocational groups." The Marxist, ignorant as he is, swallows this statistical evidence without criticism, and advances the hypothesis that the miners may be militant just because they are well paid. He gets, of course, the obvious answer that a theory which can explain similar effects from contradictory causes, is no good.

With that, it seems established that "there is no discernible relationship between the miners' economic interests and the strike" and that a material base for a wage conflict "appears to be lacking." In other words, the miners had no reason to strike.

But this is all humbug. No serious Marxist ever maintained that *only* the *lowest*-paid wage earners have reasons to strike for better wages; and nobody ever taught that *only* the *best*-paid workers are able to fight. What Marxists and most non-Marxist socialists say, is that *all* wage workers are exploited when they sell their labor power, and have reasons to organize and to struggle for better working conditions. If Macdonald wants to disprove *this* thesis, he must say so.

The same method is used to refute all sociological explanations of Lewis' activities. Is Lewis a socialist? No, he believes in free enterprise. Is he a principled fighter for economic freedom in the Manchesterian sense and against all state interference? No, he accepts reforms and higher wages from the State. Is he a business unionist? No, he is not a good business unionist, because he gambles. So, Marxism is defeated and you cannot explain Lewis except as a ham actor . . .

Well, the explanation is, in my opinion, rather simple. Lewis *is* a business unionist—whether a good one or not, that does not affect the definition. In my opinion, he is—or was—one of the best ones; but the age of "business unionism" nears its end. This explains Lewis' past glory and his present difficulties.

In a capitalist economy, workers have only their labor power to sell. In order to sell it better, they organize and bargain collectively. They claim the same right as any other owner of commodities has: *not* to sell if the price is too low. So the philosophy of trade-unionism on this level is really contained in Gompers' simple formula: more! That does not exclude the acceptance of, or even the fight for, such social reforms as hours and wages legislation, social security, unemployment relief, etc. But it implies that the workers fight for better conditions within the frame of the existing capitalist society.

Did the capitalists create giant monopolistic organizations and do they dictate the prices of their commodities? All right, let us build powerful labor unions and impose on them decent prices for our labor power—that's all we need and all we care for. The workers do not have to struggle for a better social order; they should not organize for political purposes; they don't need much political education; they just have to be disciplined members of their union, to rely on its economic power and on the bargaining skill of its leaders . . . That was the philosophy of "pure and simple" trade unionism.

But capitalist economy goes on working according to its own laws. The wage gains of today are lost in the price increases of tomorrow; the wage struggles become more and more hectic and paralyze, from time to time, the whole economic life of the nation; the disproportions between better organized and strategically more powerful labor groups and the less organized and weaker ones grow; the masses, educated to rely on leaders of their own outfit, lose their spontaneous activity and inter-organizational solidarity; and the capitalists start to mobilize the middle classes, the farmers and all non-working-class elements of society against organized labor, preparing the final intervention of the State.

At the same time, the inner development of labor organizations brings another danger. The unions become more and more centralized. The decisions of leaders are substituted for decisions of membership. We obtain, inside the organization, a bureaucratic dictatorship, and finally a personal rule of the leader. The unions are still organizations *of* the workers and *for* the workers, but they often cease to be directed *by* the workers.

If this goes on without check, the labor movement can be isolated from the rest of the population, weakened inside, and curbed, if not crushed, by the State power. And there is only one road out: labor has to develop a comprehensive program of social reform, representing not only the narrow interests of one group of workers, but the common interests of all the workers, of all classes of the working population—or if you prefer, of the nation; it has to educate its members to struggle for it and to take part in all decisions; it has to develop a higher kind of solidarity than the trade-unionist one. In one word, it must be *politicized* and *democratized*, if it wants to keep the gains of yesterday and achieve better times tomorrow.

I think that every aspect of the miners' strike bears out this diagnosis. Relying on the purely economic power of the miners which worked so well before, Lewis really did not prepare the members of the organization for the strike*, he did not ask for help from other labor groups and, except for some platonic declamations, did not get any; the non-proletarian public opinion was against the miners and the working class was neutral or passive. So, when the administration decided not to appease Lewis and to fight it out, he had to retreat.**

Neither was it an accident that the administration decided to have a showdown. Perhaps the decision was precipitated by Truman's anger about the miners' voting in West Virginia; very probably, the fight was for him a means to retrieve lost

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* Of course, one should not forget that the preparation of the strike was made very difficult by the Smith-Connally Act which makes it a criminal offense to induce people to strike in state-administered plants. Everybody who participated in a meeting or a vote, preparing the strike in a democratic way, could have been put to jail. So Lewis chose to circumvent the law by "just ending the contract." From a broader point of view, it was a wrong tactic, but it would be unjust, not to mention the situation imposed on the miners by law.

** That he did so, proves that he has much more sense for realities than Macdonald seems to suspect. He already started negotiations with the Northern operators, and I am pretty sure that he will obtain valuable benefits for the miners. But the limits to the success of "militant business trade unionism" have been set.

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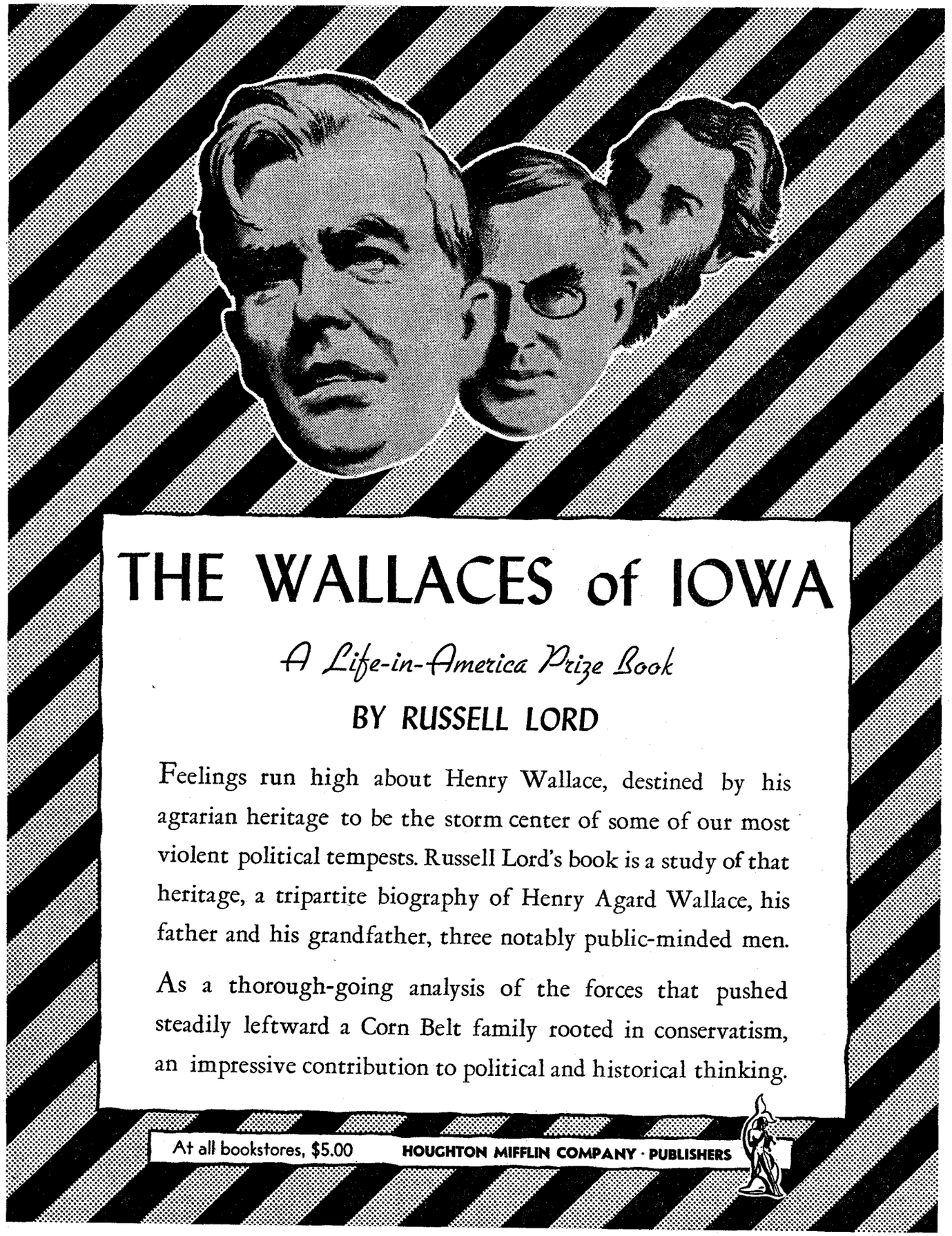
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popularity. But also without these accidental reasons, the fight was bound to come one day, and rather sooner than later. The whole bourgeois press, the whole "public opinion" shouted for it. Just here, Truman did *not* act as a "Sixth-Ward Missouri Politician"; he acted as a statesman, a bourgeois statesman of course. It is not so important why he used this opportunity to become popular again; it is more useful to know *why this was the opportunity.*

The same, by the way, goes for Lewis. One of his personal motives in calling a strike just now was without doubt his ambition to start the second cycle of wage struggles and to beat his competitors among union leaders. This may explain why he chose a certain moment; but more important is to know why he acted according to a certain pattern and why this kind of acting, so often successful in the past, did not work well this time.

*

So much for an explanation. But there is also a moral question involved, and as POLITICS is an ethical magazine, this aspect should be discussed too.

The strike was—with all its limitations—a struggle for two demands: for an improvement in wages and working conditions and for the right to strike.

It broke out when the increase in prices had devaluated the wage raises obtained last spring; and shortly after the administration had capitulated before the meat-sellers' strike, and removing all price controls, had recognized the right of all owners of commodities (except labor) to withhold their services from society, if they don't get the price they demand.

In addition to this, it was rather clear that the victory of the miners would help other workers to obtain their increases; and that their defeat meant a great danger to the freedom of strike of all wage earners.

So the simple moral question was: were the miners right to ask for better wages and to defend their (and other workers') right to strike? If yes, you have to support them, however you may criticize their tactics and leadership. If not, you have to denounce them.

I read Dwight Macdonald's article several times and I still don't dare to say how he solved this moral question. Sometimes his statistics seemed to imply that the miners, being "the second best-paid vocational group," have got just enough and have to shut up. But there is also a sentence that "certainly the workers have justice on their side when they demand higher wages now."

If so, let us fight for justice, instead of concentrating the criticism on Mr. Lewis' ham-acting!

I must say that I strongly resent the substitution of esthetic judgments for political and moral decisions. In my opinion, it is simply immoral and irresponsible. If a servant girl is maltreated by her mistress and wants better pay and better treatment, I have to be on her side and not to care that she may wear a strange red hat and be hysterical. When the inhabitants of a Ghetto fought against their tormentors, only scoundrels evaded to take side pointing out that the victims were dirty and behaved, may be, in a histrionic way. Or, is the fight against exploitation—as fascism in the famous saying—a matter of taste?

Twenty years ago, the miners had miserable wages, long working hours, no vacations, no safety in the mines, and no social security. They were often killed by accidents, their families lived in shacks and their children were hungry. Today, their conditions improved in many ways, and everybody knows that this improvement was due to their organized fight, to their UMW, and to a certain degree, to a Mr. Lewis who indulged in old-fashioned oratory all the time.

Well, if the old ways of fighting are not efficient any more and if they bring dangers for the just cause of the workers, let us criticize them and look for better ones. But let us not desert the just cause under the pretext that we don't like the acting in the play. We could gladly suffer a lot more of ham-acting if it brings to each miner's family a lot more of—ham.

PETER MEYER

December 27, 1946.

2.

Peter Meyer need not worry: he is *not* the only reader who violently disagrees. "Criminally irresponsible," "fantastic," "purposive confusion," "immoral and mischievous," "obscenely irresponsible disregard of the miners' involvement," "you have merely succumbed to the convenient capitalist notion that coal strikes are caused by That Man Lewis"—such are some of the reactions.* Their heat is not surprising, since my article challenged two prime assumptions of Marxism: that events may be satisfactorily explained through reference to economic factors; and that there is some special moral virtue in trade union activities.

First, some concessions: (1) the Man from Marx is indeed a Straw Man from Marx, a lay figure chosen for dramatic purposes, but I insist that his obtuseness, while greater than that of most real Marxists, is of a thoroughly Marxian character; (2) in stressing the miners' relatively high wages, I should also have mentioned their bad living and working conditions (see Jim Cork's article in *The Call* of Jan. 20 for a firsthand description).

Meyer disagrees with me on two planes: (1) historical (why did the strike come about?) and (2) moral (what should be our attitude toward it?).

* The word "irresponsible" crops up a lot; I have noticed that whenever one tries to think independently of the established institutions of our age (such as the labor movement), the partisans of such institutions charge one with being "irresponsible." What they mean is that one feels no responsibility to the things *they* respect; but precisely the question is whether this respect is justified. If it is not, then to be responsible to truth means to be irresponsible to such institutions as the State, the nation and labor unions.

(1)

My article tried to discover, by a close analysis of the data, why this particular strike occurred; the only causal factor I could find was the psychological make-up of John L. Lewis. Meyer retorts with a general argument to the effect that unions strike in order to gain economic benefits and that Lewis in the past has won economic gains for his miners. I agree with both these points, but still want to know why *this* strike came about; the contention of my article was precisely that these familiar *general* explanations do not seem to explain the *specific* instance. All that Meyer has to say on this is that Lewis was simply acting as a business unionist, as in the past, but that the times were unpropitious for such tactics. But I maintain—as the original article showed in detail—that even a most inept business unionist would not have called a strike against the government, in a hostile political context, after securing enormous gains by a strike only last spring, and with no reasonable hope of playing the private operators off against the government. Murray and Tobin and Dubinsky are also business unionists; their unions have lower pay scales and were in a more favorable position for a strike than the miners; yet their behavior has been much more circumspect than Lewis's.

Meyer evades my main point, which was not whether the miners had any reason to strike, but whether these reasons—good or bad—played a significant part in the calling of the strike. He confuses the statement: the miners' demand for more pay was not a significant cause of the strike; with the statement: the miners did not want more pay. The first is what I wrote; the second is what he thinks I wrote. I didn't say: "The miners had no reason to strike." I said: "There is

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no discernible relation between the miners' economic interests and the strike." In a word, the contention is that the strike was called not because the miners wanted it, since they had no more chance of implementing or even expressing their attitude toward a strike than the American people had of expressing their desires about war or peace on the day after Pearl Harbor; but simply because Lewis wanted it. What to a Marxist must appear the primary factor—the miners' economic interests—played a minor, incidental role. Incidentally, Meyer is incorrect when he says that I wrote that "a material base for a wage conflict appears to be lacking"; what I wrote was that a materialistic base *for Lewis's behavior* appears to be lacking.

The problem which an institution like the United Mine Workers poses to the Marxist view of history is similar to that posed by the Nazi and Stalinist forms of government: the perfection of a bureaucratic mechanism heading up to a single man or group of men at the top makes it possible for this man or these few men to move the apparatus in the direction their own feelings and intelligence may favor, with a high degree of freedom from those class and economic forces to which Marxism looks for the clue to understanding history. The reduction of the vast majority of men to impersonal parts of the machine enhances the subjective free will of those at the very top, making their decisions more and more difficult to predict, or even to explain after the event. Even if one grants that the Marxian concept of the "economic base" is valid, which I personally doubt, the notion becomes less and less useful as the "superstructure" grows increasingly independent of the base.

(2)

I think it doubtful whether a bureaucratised union like the UMW—and most of our great unions are developing that way, though few have reached the rotten-ripeness of the UMW—can be considered as much more than an economic pressure-group, like a trade association, which may advance the interests of its members but has no particular relation to the interests of the rest of us. Meyer will probably grant the *subjective* point, but will argue that *objectively* such a union is to be favored because it is fighting for workers against capitalists. But I've become increasingly suspicious of this kind of "objective" justification, so frequently used by Marxists. When Marx developed a theory giving the industrial workingclass a special moral plus-value, this class was the lowest, most oppressed class. So Marx argued that it could only improve its position by an upheaval from the bottom of the whole structure; hence its interests are those of society as a whole. This theory seems to me now obsolete: industrial workers in this country rank considerably above most share-croppers, salesclerks, office workers, petty retail merchants, and even teachers, librarians and such professional workers as trained nurses. (For example, there are fully-qualified teachers, with credits representing years of study, at my boy's school who get $36 a week; and 80% of the teaching staff gets under $40 a week.) As for the idea that the interests of the industrial workers are those of society as a whole—this seems an ungrounded assertion when one considers the results of the victory of workingclass organizations in various parts of Europe since 1918.

There are two further justifications for the idea that the advancement of the economic interests of the workingclass has some necessary connection with progress toward a more desirable form of society: (1) higher wages enable the workers to lead more human lives and thus to be "better material" for socialism; (2) the process of struggle itself educates the workers, makes them more conscious of their alleged role as the spearhead of a better society.

If Lewis had won the strike for his miners (this formulation is quite deliberate), they would undoubtedly have gained higher wages. But what has this to do with my own interests, as a radical who wants to see the classic goals of socialism realized, or with *their* interests, for that matter? Would this make them more likely to throw out Lewis and begin to act as free men within their own union? On the contrary: the rank and file puts up with dictators like Lewis precisely because they "bring home the bacon." Would they lead more humanly rewarding lives as a consequence—get more pleasure out of their work, enjoy their family lives more, realize their own human potentialities better, substitute real enjoyments of an artistic and communal nature for the fake pleasures offered by the radio and the movies? Such an idea is so absurd that only a New York intellectual like myself could even entertain it. They would use their extra wages to buy the unsatisfying commodities that our culture offers, to live the life of Americans today, which, in my opinion, is not a very pleasureable or rewarding life.* Would they be stimulated to take the lead in fighting for a war-less, cooperative society? The question is rhetorical.

A simple pragmatic test may be applied here: the coal miners, as Meyer points out, have greatly improved their economic position under the reign of Lewis—as have the other industrial workers of this country since World War I; but the level of consciousness of the American workingclass—in the sense of their revolt against the status quo and their sense of fraternity with the oppressed of the world—is lower today than it was, say, in 1910 or 1911. The Marxian formula, in short, just doesn't "work." A much more drastic revolution is required: a revolution in men's ways of thinking and feeling. An organization like the UMW does not seem to have much of a relation to such a revolution.

There is more to be said for the idea that the strike struggle itself "educates" the strikers. But the obvious fact about the miners' strike—and, for that matter, the great strikes of last winter in steel, rubber, auto, oil and railroads—is that it was *not* a struggle, so far as the rank and file were concerned. The miners stayed out of the mines, but that was the total extent of their activity; the real conflict went on in the courts and in the union and governmental headquarters. Compare the coal strike with previous major strikes in our history. In the 1894 railroad strike, the big IWW strikes in textiles and steel and mining of the 1900-1914 period, the 1919 steel strike, and the 1936-7 CIO strikes the workers themselves were passionately involved; they pushed their leaders into bold, creative rebellion (the sit-down tactic in 1937) or at least followed the lead of leaders like Debs and Haywood who challenged the most sacred assumptions of Law & Order. Such strikes threatened (although, unfortunately, they failed) to crack the shell of class society. But the post-war strikes today are conflicts between two sets of stable, bureaucratic, closely-organized social institutions, in which all the inventiveness, creativity and even simple activity are monopolized by the respective officials on each side; they do not remotely threaten the status quo, and they do not permit the grey mass of the rank-and-file to express its frustrations and aspirations

* This is a crude, exaggerated statement of a very subtle and difficult question. More money, in this society, is certainly better on the whole than less money. The possession of a car or a washing machine enables one to lead a more satisfactory life than not to have one. But so too can one be more or less uncomfortable on a bed that does not fit one. The kind of society we have evolved doesn't "fit" us as human beings. Compared to the possibilities of ease and enjoyment in a more humanly-adapted society, these adjustments depending on our cash income are inconsequential. And the only way I see of getting such a better society is through consciousness, will—not through economic "progress." The wealthy don't appear to lead much happier lives than the coal miners—and the only result of the Lewis "business unionist" approach is to bring the miners closer to wealth. But suppose every miner made at least $200 a week. What then?

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in any way whatsoever. Even the picket line has been reduced to a respectable ceremonial like a St. Patrick's Day parade in New York. And in the coal strike, the union was so firmly established that even picket lines were non-existent. This is a gain, insofar as one continues to attach hopes to the increasing power of labor unions, but it must be conceded that that "education" of the workers which Rosa Luxemburg in an earlier period rightly insisted was developed by their experiences in class struggle (cf. *The Mass Strike*) is not furthered by a strike in which lawyers replace shop stewards as tacticians.

"The unions are still organizations *of* the workers and *for* the workers," writes Meyer, "but they often cease to be directed *by* the workers." But can unions be organizations *for* the workers if they are not run *by* the workers? Can you *give* people anything worth getting in short; don't they have to get it for themselves by their own efforts? This would seem to be a socialist truism, yet Marxists today, in their desperation, are clutching at this "objective" straw.

"I strongly resent the substitution of esthetic judgments for political and moral decisions," writes Meyer. "In my opinion, it is simply immoral and irresponsible." He adds that if a servant girl is ill-treated, we must be on her side even if she wears a funny hat and is hysterical. I agree with both statements. But my contention is precisely that the servant girl herself, or the miners, are *not* involved here, but rather a repellent demagogue who pretends to speak for them. I do not identify the miners with Lewis's atrocious rhetoric, as Meyer seems to do; it is Lewis, not the miners, who is hysterical and wears the strange red hat; indeed, it was precisely my complaint that Lewis's ham-actor posing has taken leave of all reality and expresses simply his own cheap vanity. As for the *substitution* of esthetic judgments for political-moral decisions, that would be patently wrong. But is there not a legitimate *connection* to be made? (Oddly, my former colleagues of *Partisan Review* have reproached me most bitterly, and very much in Meyer's terms, for making fun of *their* prose style in their recent unhappy attempt at political writing. I found myself, in fact, in the comic position of trying to convince the editors of a literary magazine that style is not just an adornment, a decoration applied from outside and that one seldom finds serious ideas expressed in cliches or deeply-felt moral convictions put forth in a debased form.) Lewis's oratorical style reveals that he is just "hoking it up": a leader who expresses the real aspirations of the underdog does not talk like a dime novel hero. (Nor is it at all a matter of formal education: leaving Lincoln aside, we have had real eloquence from Debs, Vanzetti and John Brown, to name three instances that come to mind.) My impression is that Lewis's public pronouncements have become significantly more coarse and magniloquent of late years, and that his style in the 1935-1938 period, when he was in some contact with great popular aspirations, was esthetically superior to his present style.

January 26, 1947 DWIGHT MACDONALD

3.

I did not object to Macdonald's introducing the Man from Marx for dramatic purposes. I protested—giving my reasons—against the *misrepresentation* of Marxian views, by which Macdonald assured his cheap victory over his own caricature of Marxism. Now I hear that this lay figure was obtuse in the same way as Marxists are, and that's all there is to it. This seems to me to be a substitution of name-calling for argument, and I don't like it.

Macdonald had denied that the coal strike can be explained from the history and development of "pure" or "business" unionism. I tried to explain it just that way showing why this kind of unionism finds itself in a blind alley today. Now, Macdonald shifts the question: but tell me why just *this* strike came about.

That's easy. Some weeks before it started, price control was abolished and the prices went up. It always belonged to the traditions of unionism, to recover such losses by wage increases. And when the government acknowledged the right of meat-sellers to withhold their commodities from the market, if they don't get the "proper" price, wasn't it time for the workers to assert the right to withhold *their* commodity, the labor-power, if they don't get *their* price? That other leaders did not strike at the same time, waiting until their contracts expire and watching the outcome of the miners' strike, is not a proof that a victory was impossible.

It was a fight for higher wages—and for the right to strike. And it rather startles me that Macdonald almost completely neglects the second, so important point. If the administration wins its case before the Supreme Court, it will mean that the Government has the right to prohibit and to punish concerted work stoppage wherever it, according to its opinion, threatens important public interest. How serious are the talks about "non-violent revolution," if its adherents show so little concern about their main weapon, their right to collective refusal of work? In this respect at least, the fight involved one of the elementary freedoms of all the citizens: the freedom from coercion to work.

That's what *this* strike was about. Its timing might have been tactically wrong. The autocratic manner in which Lewis decided everything himself, was certainly bad. I tried to show that it was one of the main reasons of the defeat and that it can lead to much worse disasters in the future.

I agree that unions cannot remain indefinitely organizations *for* the workers if they are not run *by* the workers. *Finally*, organizations run by bureaucracy without control of the membership, will become organizations *against* the workers, either in the service of capitalists or of the bureaucracy itself, should it become the ruling class in economy and state. This happened to Russian unions and to the German Arbeitsfront. This *can* be the *final* result of the alienation of unions from the democratic control of their membership.

But it would be silly to confound a *tendency* with its possible *final result* and to say that American unions already today are an instrument to exploit and enslave the workers. They still represent the workers' interests, although there is no guarantee that they always will do so, if the process of bureaucratization goes on unchecked. They still can be reformed and democratized—this battle has by no means been already lost.

There is no doubt that there is much to be criticized. But my dispute with Macdonald is about something else. Our problem is: in spite of all errors, dictatorial decisions and egoistic motives of many union leaders, is the labor struggle for better living conditions a *just* struggle, yes or not?

Macdonald admits that the strange hat of a servant girl does not make her fight for better treatment unjust. Thank God for that; but how come that the strange hat of the miners' leader makes the fight for *their* wages contemptible?

I am rather desperate that Macdonald does not understand my point, but let me try once more:

Suppose that Sacco and Vanzetti would have had a bad lawyer, prompted only by vanity and the hope to get fat fees. Suppose that he would have indulged in ham acting before the court, spoiling his clients' legal chances. This, *I* would say, would have been a reason to criticize him, to try to get a better lawyer. But it would not affect the justice of Sacco-Vanzetti's case, would it?

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Of course, there may be another school of thought. Those poor Italian anarchists, such people would say, are for Mr. So-and-so just a pretext for self-advertising and earning money. They were not even consulted how they should be defended—so their role in the case is immaterial. Their interest in the litigation plays a minor, incidental role . . . There is no discernible relation between their interest and the trial . . .

Well, this is exactly the line Macdonald followed in the miners' case up to now.

But now, he offers two additional reasons against the miners' fight. They are, I am sorry to say, very similar to arguments which workers used to hear whenever they asked for better wages in past hundred years. The first one is: don't they have enough? Look at the sharecroppers who get still less! And the second runs along this line: look, money would not make them happy, anyway, they would just spend it in saloons and movies . . .

I am rather surprised to meet such arguments in POLITICS. But I admit that the similarity with the argumentation of very old-fashioned manufacturers does not refute them by itself. So I have to answer.

Yes, sharecroppers, teachers, librarians earn less than miners. But Macdonald still has to find a Man from Marx who would deny that all these people are entitled to the same support in their fight for better wages as industrial workers. So why is the fact of their exploitation a reason against the demand that mine operators pay more to the coal miners? Wouldn't the conclusion rather be that all these underprivileged people have to fight together against their exploiters?

As to the second argument, it is true that Diogenes was happy in his barrel and the happy man in the fairy tale had no shirt, but up to now, it was not considered a fair argument against improvements in housing and clothing. Neither was the fact, that one can be unhappy with 200 bucks a week, or even as a dollar-a-year man, accepted as a serious objection against the struggle for better living conditions.

Socialists and unionists never asserted that the improvement of material conditions automatically brings happiness to everybody. It is, in their opinion, only the first, but *necessary* condition for its achievement in most cases. Does Macdonald really believe that it does not make any difference in the amount of happiness, whether the family has to live on 40 or 200 dollars a week, whether you have to work 40 or 50 hours for your living, whether the family members get free medical care and whether the father is better protected against accidents in the mine?

And I maintain that it is better for a miner to spend some dollars for "fake pleasures" than if this money remains in the operators' pocket. I have to defend the miner's right to see a movie picture, even if he chooses, in my opinion, a bad one, and yes, his right to have a drink, even if it is, for my taste, abominable. Only education and enlightenment can make him substitute "real enjoyment" for a "fake pleasure." But first you must give him the possibility to see, to try, and to choose. And his "worst" pleasure, chosen freely, is better than having a "real enjoyment" prescribed by anybody, be it a totalitarian government or the editor of POLITICS. I already hear Macdonald shout: 'I don't want to dictate to anybody!' You don't, but you do not support the miners' struggle for better wages because they would spend their increased income in "fake pleasures"!

It is quite true that better living conditions do not automatically change people into better fighters for socialism. Again, they give them only a better *opportunity* to develop into such fighters. Look for instance at Germany or Austria where so many devoted socialists and unionists simply cannot fight for their ideas because they are hungry and have to spend all their time and energy in hunting food. This is an extreme example, but doesn't it apply, mutatis mutandis, also to a miner who has to spend most of his energy in the mine? Doesn't the material improvement in most cases make the development of social consciousness easier? It does not automatically *guarantee* such development, it is true; for this, conscious efforts or, if you want, *preaching* of socialist ideas is necessary. But this preaching would not have much effect, if you could not prove that the workers can achieve something, get some improvement by collective effort.

Macdonald is right in saying that union tactics which substitute the command of the leaders for the decisions and active cooperation of the masses don't contribute to the education in the same way as the more spontaneous struggles of the past. But the reason for the militancy of those times was not simply that the workers lived in worse conditions. This would lead us to the desperate communist "third-period" theory: the worse for the masses, the better for our struggle . . .

Let us not forget that only a small part of the population took part in the avantguard clashes of the past. The rest was passive and indifferent. Now, new millions were organized; the stream of unionism became broader—and, in many respects, shallower. Union members often got concessions without great efforts. Business unionism achieved rather easily its great successes. But this cannot go on forever. A crisis is approaching, new methods will have to be developed, and there will be plenty of opportunity for mass education.

But the masses will not listen to the preaching of those who did not know on whose side to stand in their struggles for such prosaic things as better wages, shorter hours, health insurance and security against accidents. And in my opinion, they will be right.

February 4, 1947 PETER MEYER

4.

This discussion has been fruitful, I think, in that it has revealed more disagreement than appeared to exist at first. By now, I appear to Meyer as an apologist for exploitation to whom the masses "will not listen", while he has assumed for me more and more the shape of the mythical Man from Marx. "A crisis is approaching": true; in fact, crises succeed each other monotonously, without our lot thereby improving. "New methods will have to be developed": also true; but no hint is given as what these methods are, and the whole argument rests on the traditional concepts which have failed to yield such methods. "There will be plenty of opportunity for mass education": there has been, for generations, and with what results? This sort of thing is conventional Marxian piety, useful in confounding the heretic but not illuminating otherwise.

The difference between our methods is roughly this: as a Marxist, Meyer grants the specific criticism but looks at the general picture and toward the future; as an anarchist, I draw conclusions from what is here right now. Thus he writes: "I agree that unions cannot remain indefinitely organizations *for* the workers if they are not run *by* the workers. *Finally,* organizations run by bureaucracy without control of the membership, will become organizations *against* the workers . . . But it would be silly to confound a *tendency* with its possible final result, and to say that American unions already today are an instrument to exploit and enslave the workers." As to confounding tendencies and final results, Meyer read me carelessly: my point was the same as his— that American unions are *tending* towards a bureaucratic structure which enslaves the workers. We do differ on the United Mine Workers, which I think is already there. Meyer doesn't, yet he fails to show how the UMW could become any *more* of a one-man dictator-

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ship than it is now. He evades the question by doubletalk about "finally" and "indefinitely", terms which allow one to put up with present evils while platonically agreeing with their critics. Personally, I believe that an organization is *for* the workers only to the degree it is run *by* the workers.

The sort of things I'd like to see the labor movement go in for are: make the unions into really functioning popular organs by kicking out the present top leaders, decentralizing control and making the lines of relationship cooperative and from the bottom up instead of authoritarian and from the top down; create communities in which people can live with the maximum of both fraternity and individuality; force a complete rearrangement of industrial work which would make pleasure for the workers the main criterion, instead of productivity; develop cultural activities—libraries, plays, music, painting and handicrafts, lectures, etc.; take the lead in a popular political movement towards pacifism and anarchism.

In short, my aims are quite Utopian. Meyer would probably agree that they are superior to the simple wage struggle. The difference between us is that, by looking to the future and talking about wage increases being "a precondition of socialism", he can identify himself somewhat with the narrow struggles the unions in fact do carry on, and can continue to hope—as the Marxists have hoped for a century now—that the whole process is leading toward socialism although any specific part of it one examines may show no signs of doing so; whereas I am in the uncomfortable position of looking at the here and now instead of at the there and then, at the immediate fact instead of at the general process, so that I must conclude that if the workers fight only for more wages, they are not at all advancing toward the other aims listed above and may even be retreating from them. The Marxists, of course, have always told the workers that wage gains are "not enough"; but the unions have gone right along devoting 90% of their energies to wage fights, and the Marxists have clung to their coattails by saying: not enough, but something. (A Marxist separated from his "mass base" is like a turtle on his back.) I think it is time we stopped kidding ourselves. Because I am concerned about breaking out of the impasses the "process-thinking" of Marxism has landed us in today, I think it well to attack, even perhaps in an exaggerated way, the traditional Marxist concept of the workingclass movement, to strip the trade unions of the halo they wear according to this concept, and to recognize dictatorship even when it wears proletarian overalls.

March 23, 1947. DWIGHT MACDONALD

Mario and the Hypnoanalyst

I was deprived of everything that gave meaning to life . . . shut off from the people that were mine . . . deprived of my rights to think and to act. . . . Anyone who does not feel happy or satisfied under these circumstances, anyone who does not adjust himself, is considered perverse or abnormal. . . . The Freudians are an unscrupulous lot when it comes to their pet hypotheses, and the Freudians are in power. . . .

I have seldom met a doctor who believed in taking his own medicine; their system of make-believe is for others. . . . The sciences do not deal with the truth. They corrupt the individual . . . feed him untruths that he may be kept unaware of his own corruption. . . . Were one to abide by the requirements laid down by the Freudians one would not dare to think at all. . . . Especially one would not dare to . . . philosophize about things. That which formerly was known as rich inner life they would term daydreaming or fantasy, escape from reality, compensatory devices. . . . Religion, daydreaming, drunkenness . . . there is scarcely a thing that humans do that the Freudians would not classify as defense or escape mechanisms or compensatory devices—except psychology, of course.

THESE are not the conclusions of a critic of the moral values underlying psychoanalytic thinking, but rather the speculations of an anonymous state-hospital patient, "Johann R.," before undergoing the hypnoanalysis which was to "cure" him. With striking resemblance to Dostoevsky's *Man from Underground,* Johann, before treatment, was a timid, untidy creature, "absorbed in his own ideas . . . mumbling to himself about such vague matters as atoms, molecules, the iniquities of life and the *philosophic differences between goodness and badness*" (italics mine.—L. H. F.). Like many other philosophers he felt uneasy in the presence of normal people, and "whenever he addressed anyone he kept his mouth covered and gazed down at the floor." Dr. Wolberg* had already tried other methods to change Johann's appearance before he resorted to hypnosis. For example, he "personally escorted him to a local clothing store" and bought him a complete outfit, which Johann refused to wear, attempting "stealthily to distribute it among other patients." (At about this period he "became preoccupied" — not unnaturally — "with the notion that he was exuding odors offensive to those around him.")

Johann "resisted" the doctor's first attempts to hypnotize him, dreaming of a hand which came out of the wall, filling him with horror. But it was explained that this was the "helping hand" of the doctor, and that the patient's resistance was caused by his "fear of a close relationship." By the end of the week he was "able to sink into a light trance" which soon became a "deep somnambulistic state." But apparently this was not enough; Dr. Wolberg wanted the "intimacy of the hypnotic relationship" to be pleasant, too. "The theory behind this was that if the patient could experience intense pleasure in a close relationship, he might regard closeness as having some positive virtues." So Dr. Wolberg suggested to Johann, under hypnosis, that hypnosis was a very pleasurable state indeed:

"As you sit here . . . the most intense happiness comes over you. . . . You recapture all the joyous moments of your life. . . . When you wake up . . . this pleasurable emotion . . . will embrace every fiber of your being. . . . You will bubble with sheer joy. . . . Happiness will well up inside of you until it overflows, and the world will be a bountiful and joyous place."

Presumably the experiment was a complete success: Johann awoke "with a confused, joyous expression on his face."

Having made hypnotic intimacy desirable, Dr. Wolberg turned his attention to the problem of obedience itself; Johann's meekness and submission to authority were solved in an ingenious way. On the theory that one's internalized parents are the only real Authorities one ever has to worry about, Dr. Wolberg felt that his own role in the matter was merely to push the invisible therapeutic buttons which would let Authority out and Enlightenment in:

"When you awaken, you will feel very happy . . . and self-confident. You will go to the dining room . . . tell the waitress that you care neither for the food nor the service. . . ."

Twenty minutes later Johann returned from the dining room flushed with dismay, if not self-confidence. "He appeared to be manifestly upset by this open demonstration of aggression." And though he was "reassured that his complaints" to the waitress "were undoubtedly justified," he remained doubtful. The next day he had a complete amnesia for the experience; "it was apparent that his fear of aggression was still sufficiently great to bring repressive forces into play." Nevertheless, we can see that Johann has taken a big step toward recovery: always a timid man, he has now learned to obey orders to the point of insulting waitresses over imaginary provocations.

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* Hypnoanalysis, by Lewis R. Wolberg, M.D., New York: Grune and Stratton. 338 pages. $4.

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A most spectacular change came over Johann physically. He held his head high, and he seemed to be able to express himself much better; there was no faltering for words. . . . He stopped looking at the ground and . . . holding his fingers over his mouth when he talked. He even wore his new clothing, polished his shoes and tucked a breast handkerchief in his coat.

In other words, Johann was becoming a real individual who would soon be able to talk and dress like every other individual in this individualistic society. Two years after his release from the hospital, while paying a friendly visit to the doctor, "hypnotic associations disclosed a persisting image of himself as an intact and likable person."

This remarkable cure was effected by the elaborate application of Freudian theories to a series of hypnotic devices, all of unquestionable virtuosity—automatic writing and drawing, artificial dreams, "spontaneous dreams," crystal gazing, "regression" to various age-levels of childhood. As Abram Kardiner says in his introduction, "While no reliable theory about hypnosis exists today, it has made giant strides in the domain of technic." In fact, there are times when Johann himself seems to be rather carried away by the doctor's inventiveness:

Under hypnosis . . . he would dream [about his relations with his family] but . . . would blot his dream completely from his mind; in addition the dream, though forgotten, would stimulate a compulsion to draw, and the drawing would symbolize more clearly the meaning of the dream.

Given the author's faith that all "attitudes" of patients come straight from childhood causes lying "dormant in the unconscious" and that hypnosis is a miraculous method for tapping or "mobilizing" them, it follows naturally that he can make such statements as this:

[J.] was instructed to integrate his unconscious and conscious feelings. When he awakened, however, there was no indication that he had absorbed this command. His free associations, though carefully noted, involved matter-of-fact things and made no reference to any of his deeper problems.

Probably the doctor had forgotten to suggest which "conscious and unconscious feelings" he was supposed to integrate.

In the course of his integration of Johann, Dr. Wolberg discovered that his persistent intellectuality and preoccupation with philosophical questions had been caused by "early difficulties with masturbation." Dr. Kardiner, who contributes "A Dynamic Interpretation" of the case, agrees. "That this striving for knowledge is sexual in its roots is clearly brought out by the fact that [the patient] regards it as sinful." Another proof which Dr. Kardiner fails to mention is that the Samoans and Marquesans regard Science itself as sinful.

During the final phase of the four-month cure Dr. Wolberg dealt with the "odor of burning flesh" which had troubled Johann's first days at the hospital, when he feared he was to be electrocuted for his sins. To prove this was psychosis rather than fact, Dr. Wolberg induced various hallucinations under hypnosis, thus demonstrating to Johann how greatly his senses had deceived him in the past. The last session was spent "explaining to him, at both a regressed and an adult level, the significance of his strivings, the meaning of his illness and the progress he had achieved in understanding his unconscious motivations." We wonder which age-level Dr. Wolberg chose to receive this information. By this time, at any rate, Johann's early resentment against Freudians has disappeared, along with the vague ideas about good and evil. In addition to having a hypnotic image of himself as "intact" and "likeable" he doubtless continues to wear a breast handkerchief and to speak sharply to waitresses.

Without underrating the ingenuity of Dr. Wolberg's techniques and theories, we can probably conclude that the chief credit for this change in Johann rests squarely with the doctor himself. Hypnosis, that mysterious "close relationship," has been defined by Robert W. White as the state of "behaving like a hypnotized person, as this is continuously defined by the hypnotist and understood by the subject."* And with this definition most of the mysteries disappear—except of course the central mystery of why people obey orders, write books, hypnotize each other and in general behave as they do.

LESLIE H. FARBER

* "A Preface to the Theory of Hypnotism," by Robert W. White. The *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (October, 1941).

WHERE IS KARL FISCHER?

On March 20, 1947, the following cablegram was sent to General Mark Clark, Commander of the U. S. Occupation Forces in Austria: KARL FISCHER OFFICIAL OF LINZ LABOR CHAMBER AND ANTICOMMUNIST LEADER DISAPPEARED JANUARY 22 ON TRIP TO URFAHR IN RUSSIAN ZONE STOP FRIENDS HERE WORRIED REQUEST YOU INVESTIGATE (SIGNED) DOROTHY DUNBAR BROMLEY; JOHN KNOX JESSUP; DWIGHT MACDONALD; DOROTHY THOMPSON.

The story behind the cable is this.

Karl Fischer has been getting packages from two POLITICS readers. His mother wrote them a few weeks ago that he had disappeared; we received, independently, a detailed letter about the disappearance from friends of his in Paris. Both communications indicated reasonable grounds for the belief that he had been abducted, perhaps killed, by the Communists.

Karl Fischer is a member of the Austrian Socialist Party; he is 29 years old, has served a prison term under Schuschnigg and spent two years in Buchenwald (1943-1945) under the Nazis. At Buchenwald, he was persecuted by the Communists, especially by Otto Horn, who is now one of the Communist chieftains in Austria; he escaped death only through the aid of an influential fellow-prisoner, Benedict Kautsky, son of the socialist theoretician, Karl Kautsky. After Buchenwald was liberated by the American forces, Fischer went to Linz, in the American zone of Austria, where he joined his mother. At the time of his disappearance, he was employed in the economic bureau of the Linz Labor Chamber. He made no secret of his political views, speaking out publicly against the Communists.

Karl Fischer had a girl friend: Vera Kerschbaumer, whose father is a member of the C.P. and the director of its publishing house in Linz. Shortly before Fischer's disappearance, the C.P. leader for Upper Austria, Haider, tried to persuade Vera to spy on Karl; she refused and warned Karl. Another C.P. leader gave Karl a "friendly warning" about this time.

On January 22, Fischer went with Vera to Urfahr, just across the zonal border, in the Russian zone. She says he left her at 5:45 to go back to Linz. That is the last his mother has heard of him. *Where is Karl Fischer?* The local authorities have shown little interest in the question. Karl's boss, Richard Strasser, a member of the Association of Friends of the Soviet Union, speaks of his "lack of psychical balance" and hints at suicide. His mother—who was herself for two years in a Nazi camp—says this is nonsense.

Where is Karl Fischer?

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THE INTELLIGENCE OFFICE

The Communists and Viet Nam

Sir:

I read with interest George Padmore's article on Viet Nam. But I was surprised that the author, an I. L. P. militant of many years' standing, omitted to inform us on a capital point. Namely, the implications of the fact that Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Namese leader, is a Communist. (I have even seen him identified as Nguyen-Ay-Quac, whom I used to know in Moscow.) George Padmore mentions only in the vaguest terms Ho Chi Minh's connection with Moscow.

As a Communist, Ho Chi Minh rules in the name of the Kremlin. That means that he follows a policy of persecuting, if not exterminating, Trotskyists, Socialists and other independent radicals. It means that "the national emancipation of Indo-China" is actually the establishment of a totalitarian regime, and that the bloody events now taking place there are simply one phase of a worldwide campaign directed by a power which cares nothing for the liberty and well-being of the Annamese. And that poses to all of us—liberals, socialists, radicals alike—this question: should we sympathize with colonial revolts when their real meaning is the expansion of totalitarianism?

I am all the more anxious to know George Padmore's opinion on this point because I note he has just published a book entitled, "How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire: a detailed and authoritative account of the federal state structure of the Soviet Union." Any one who has studied the Russian totalitarian system knows that Soviet "federalism" is a lie cemented with blood, that the personnel of all the "federated" state governments in central Asia, the Caucasus and the Far East have been purged again and again on orders from Moscow, with many executions each time; that the native populations have been decimated by mass deportations; that no less than five "national republics" have been liquidated; and that almost all the Old Bolsheviks who carried out the nationality policy of the revolutionary period have since then been shot (as, in Georgia alone: Budu Mdvani, Okudjava, Kavtaradze; or, in Central Asia, the most prominent Soviet leader there, Faycoulla Khodjaev). The Menshevik journal, *The Socialist Courier* (New York) in its issue of October 23 last published a moving report on the tragedy, during the war, of the Kalmuck people. The purges and terror in the Ukraine have been on such a scale as to be widely reported in the American press of late.

It is not high time for those who are concerned about freedom and the most elementary human rights to clarify their attitude towards the problem posed by such facts as these?

MEXICO CITY — VICTOR SERGE

Sir:

George Padmore, as the leading spirit of the International African Service Bureau, the coordinating center of the African anti-imperialist movements, and as a contributor for many years to British ILP and other publications, has always approached the whole independence struggle from a generally revolutionary socialist standpoint. It was all the more shocking, therefore, to read his article on Viet Nam in the December POLITICS. I sought in vain a single sentence that criticized the present colonial policies of the French Socialist and Communist Parties.

Padmore quotes approvingly absolutely hair-raising statements made by Ho Chi Minh, the Viet Nam President, in his interview. Ho Chi Minh assures Padmore that "the French people as a whole, especially the sections under the influence of the Communists and Socialists, are in sympathy" with the Viet Nam aspirations. Ho goes on to assign responsibility for the reactionary French policy to the MRP and the MRP-dominated cabinet of Bidault, and states his belief that if a Left Government is democratically elected in France, it will reach an amicable settlement with the Republic of Viet Nam.

Thus Padmore creates an impression of the French Socialists and Communists being held back by the MRP from carrying out what is really their heart's desire—freedom for the Viet Namese (within the "French Union", of course). How ironical this sounds as this letter is being written, at the very time when an all-Socialist cabinet in France headed by Blum has decided on all-out support of Argenlieu's military campaign against the Viet Nam. Today's paper announced a unanimous vote in the Council of the Republic (new upper house), *including the votes of the Communists*, in support of the government's military moves.* The Socialist Colonial Minister, Marius Moutet, has personally gone to Saigon to direct the struggle.

Nowhere is the art of hypocrisy so well developed as in France. The French Socialists, at their last convention, adopted a ringing manifesto for colonial independence and the right of self-determination. The manifesto was adopted unanimously. Far from admitting any contradiction of this manifesto, Moutet, in his first broadcast after arriving at Saigon, said that France was defending Cochin China (whose population is 90% Viet Namese) against annexation by Viet Nam. "It is not for us to yield up the right of the peoples of Cochin China and of Annam to self determination." (*New York Times*, December 28th).

We might excuse an innocent liberal for not being able to predict the behavior of the Socialists, but Padmore, in his resume of Indo-Chinese political history showed a pretty thorough knowledge of the recent period, except for one gap, the period of the Blum Popular Front Cabinets of 1936-7. His entire summary of the Peoples Front period, sandwiched between substantial accounts of French repressive acts before and after the Popular Front period, consists literally of three words: "However, nothing happened".

Nothing happened, Mr. Padmore? Tell that to the hundreds of Annamite workers jailed for strikes and demonstrations under Blum and Moutet's benevolent colonial regime. Tell that to the editors of nationalist and revolutionary papers imprisoned for protesting against French oppression. Tell that to the Annamite Municipal Council of Saigon, elected three times in six years, and always in jail within a couple of weeks of election day.

I would like to believe that the French people as a whole are in sympathy with the Viet Namese, as Ho says in the interview. But to believe this would be a fatal illusion. The French workers have been subjected over a period of years to a barrage of chauvinist propaganda from their own Stalinist leaders. Hate the Germans, sing the patriotic Marseillaise, believe in the "civilizing mission" of France abroad—these are the poisonous lessons that have been drilled into them. Of

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* Editor's Footnote: I must protest this as grossly unfair to the Communists. The "N. Y. Times" reports that when the delegates of all the other parties spontaneously rose to their feet and applauded Blum's policy of socialist extermination of the Viet Namese rebels, the Communist delegates remained seated. Naturally, being responsible workingclass leaders and not Utopian crackpots, the Communists did not carry this gesture too far. A short time later—accounts differ as to whether it was 60 or 65 seconds—"at a signal from their leader" the Communists rose en bloc and joined in the applause. Thus the Vietnamese were *not* deserted by their French Communist allies—at least not for 65 (or perhaps 60) seconds. —D.M.

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course, there is resistance to this, and a substantial section of radical workers sympathize with the struggles of the colonial peoples, but the majority are passive, or support the chauvinist actions of their leadership.

The omissions of Padmore in dealing with the French political parties' attitude toward Viet Nam are supplemented by similar omissions with regard to the internal politics of the Viet Minh movement. Outside of mentioning its foundation in 1925, Padmore never mentions the existence of an Indo-Chinese Communist Party. Casually remarking that Ho happened to drift into the Soviet Union and later worked in a Soviet Consulate, he omits to mention that Ho was the leader of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party (dissolved when the Viet Minh was formed). But with this added information, the sensitive anti-Stalinist reader can begin to smell a rat in what Ho has to say about continued ties with France. Padmore says, "However, they (the Viet Namese) are prepared, as President Ho told me, because of their historical ties on the one hand and their immediate technical and cultural requirements on the other, to remain within the framework of a French democratic union". Cultural requirements? Later in the article it is stated that illiteracy was produced by the French suppression of a previously existing native educational system. Technical requirements? Padmore a few paragraphs earlier explained that the French had consistently sabotaged the industrialization of the colony! The colonial regime of the French in Indo China was the bloodiest in the world. Compared to it, the British rule in India was enlightened (yet the Indian Congress, namby pamby as it is, renounces *all* ties with the British Empire!). Obviously the Viet Namese want nothing to do with the French. And to give the lie to Ho, let me quote from the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Viet Nam, September 2, 1945: "We, members of the provisional government, representing the population of Viet Nam, declare that we abolish all connection with imperialist France, annul all treaties that France has signed on the subject of Viet Nam, abolish all the privileges that the French have arrogated on our territory". (From *Verite*, Paris, 26th July).

What has happened is that the native merchant and landowning class, fearful of more basic social upheavals that would threaten its property rights, seeks to compromise with the French; and in this attempt finds an ally in the Stalinists, who want in Indo China not a social revolution but a nationalist government, oriented in foreign policy toward the Soviet Union.

To understand the role of these political forces in the country, let us give a brief account of that part of Indo-Chinese history that Ho and Padmore so consistently leave out. In 1931, whole series of executions had decimated the Indo-Chinese Communist Party.* In self defense, this party took the unprecedented step of forming a united front underground with the small group of Annamite Trotskyists in Saigon, capital of the Province of Cochin China. In the ensuing years, the workers and peasants of Cochin China asserted themselves more and more successfully, and in this province, by 1935 the united front had assumed undisputed leadership of the nationalist movement. It was in 1935 that the united front first won the Saigon elections, electing Duong Bach Mai, Stalinist leader, Tran van Tach, at that time a Stalinist sympathizer, and Ta Thu Thau, Trotskyist leader.

When the Peoples Front came to power in France, the masses that followed the Stalinists in Saigon expected amnesty for political prisoners, free speech, the right to organize unions. The attempts of the Stalinists to mediate between the masses and their "peoples" government in France ended in their being totally discredited. The united front broke up and the Trotskyists emerged as the undisputed leaders of the independence movement in Saigon. In the 1939 municipal elections the ticket of the Fourth International swept into office (and into prison a week later), beating by a large margin a nationalist-Stalinist coalition. In Cochin China as a whole the 4th International elected four out of nine Annamite deputies to the Colonial Council. And this in spite of an elite electorate limited to less than 60,000 people out of 3,500,000 in the province! A Stalinist Senator from France, "investigating conditions", landed in Saigon, and after one conference with the delegation of the Saigon illegal unions, which turned out to be composed of Trotskyists, fled the scene. He had no chance to sell the Peoples Front.

Unfortunately, under the repressive conditions, the Trotskyist movement in Cochin China exerted no influence over the mass Stalinist peasant movement in the populous northern province of Tonkin, the main base of the present Viet Nam government. With the end of World War II, the Trotskyist leaders, released from Japanese prison camps, unable to get to Saigon, isolated in the countryside, were at the mercy of the nationalists and Stalinists. Despite the meager connections with the Indo-Chinese hinterland, the French Trotskyists and the Indo-Chinese Trotskyist delegation in France have already learned of the death, under mysterious circumstances, in different parts of the country, of Ta Thu Thau and two other Trotskyist leaders, Phan Van Hum and Nguyen Aan Dat. In addition, Nguyen Van Tao, ex-secretary of the Indo-Chinese Communist Party, who had finally broken with Stalinism, was stabbed coming out of a meeting. Already an Annamite paper in Hanoi, the Viet Nam capital, has charged that members of the Viet Minh (the Independence League which set up the Viet Nam Republic) organized the assassination of the Trotskyists throughout the country. These dead Trotskyists, veterans of nineteen years of illegal struggle, would have been especially interested in Padmore's report that "for the first time elections took place recently on the basis of universal suffrage". I would like some details on these elections. What parties ran? How many votes were cast? And in view of his appalling ignorance of everything else that goes on in the country, from what magic sources did Padmore find out about elections that have never been mentioned in the French or American press?

What a far cry this whole picture is from the sweetness and light of Padmore's article where the "greatest democrat since Sun Yat Sen", Ho, leads a united Viet Namese people towards independence with the sympathy of the entire French people!

We know now that the compromise wouldn't take. Already the dispatches talk about the Viet Namese' "treacherous" attack on the French garrison in Hanoi. The entire French army, together with all the pleas of moderates, cannot keep the people of Indo-China from fighting relentlessly to oust everything French. In 1945, arms in hand, they briefly tasted freedom—they will not give it up lightly.

NEWARK, N. J. SAUL MENDELSON

—The immediate issue in Viet Nam, and the one which is actively engaging all the nationalist parties and groups, is the fight for national independence. Moscow is really very remote from Hanoi, and it is rather difficult to see, except for those who wish wilfully to distort, how day-to-day guidance of events in Viet Nam can be conducted from the Soviet Union.

Regarding the letter from Victor Serge, I want to say that I have always had a great respect for his socialist intransigeance, but I consider the views expressed in his letter entirely sub-

* For an account of the horror of French repression in Indo-China, read "L'Indochine S. O. S.", published by Andre Malraux, Andree Viollis, and a group of French writers in the early '30s.

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jective. For my part, I cannot see anything but a totalitarian outlook in the French desire to reconquer Viet Nam, and it shocks me that there has been no popular manifestation by way of a sympathetic strike or mass demonstration on the part of the French workers, who so recently were themselves suppressed under the totalitarian yoke of Nazism. If we are to follow Victor Serge's question to its logical conclusion, surely we should not support the French workers who, tacitly or expressly, condone French totalitarianism. Or perhaps he would confine himself merely to "colonial revolts".

It is the expression of such views which are more and more leading Colonial peoples to the conclusion that if they are to win their freedom from alien totalitarianism, they are unlikely to find allies among the white workers and their political theorists, and that they must rely more and more upon their own efforts and their own forms of struggle. In the case of Viet Nam, support has come from the Indian and Burmese workers and peasants, who have refused to load boats going to Indo-China, and are offering themselves to fight for Viet Nam. It is significant, too, that, despite her large Colonial divisions, France is obliged to send metropolitan troops to Viet Nam because she cannot rely upon her Senegalese fighters.

It is this awakening political consciousness among the Colonial and subject peoples all over the world that makes them acutely resentful of the attitude of white workers, socialists and "sympathisers" which presume that these oppressed peoples must of necessity look to the whites for leadership and political guidance in their fight for freedom. I am perfectly aware of the inequalities in the Soviet Union, and I have myself been a victim of Communist slander. I don't think anybody would ever dare to question my persistent adherence to my socialist and internationalist principles. I do therefore maintain my contention that it is a distortion of Marxism to talk of Russian imperialism today. I still say that despite all the inequalities in the Soviet Union, despite all the drastic purges and all the defects which intellectuals with a white skin functioning in a Western democracy so loudly deplore (I confess I also deplore them), the erstwhile subject peoples of the Union enjoy more actual democracy than the subject peoples oppressed by Western imperialists, since they are placed on a footing of equality with the Russian "master" race, and gain or lose rights with them.

What I do often wonder is what Western Socialists—and especially American Socialists—who so persistently criticise the Soviet regime, and who do so in the enjoyment of their greater personal comforts and higher standards of living, would have done if they had been placed in the same position as the Soviet leaders and given their set of circumstances. I am always astonished when I read the left-wing papers, especially from the United States, to see how much space is given up to anathemas on the Soviet Union, and how little to the problems of winning power from American capitalism, and by doing so, help to correct the defects which are so glaring in the Soviet regime.

LONDON, ENGLAND GEORGE PADMORE

Picas and Platitudes

Sir:

As a friendly reader of your journal I was rather surprised when I noticed your somewhat hysterical opposition to Mr. Woodcock when he said a kind word about our paper *The Socialist Leader.*

You say you have been reading our paper for the last two years without finding anything but excruciating platitudes in the socialist movement since 1900. Tut, tut!, you have read it very cursorily and your judgment is very biased. Let me refresh your memory.

The Socialist Leader was the first paper in Britain to voice the following extremely important matters—all during the last 3 or 4 years:—

1. Make Britain Socialist Now!
2. Opposition to Churchill's Foreign Policy, during the National Government days.
3. Opposition to the policy of "Unconditional Surrender" during the National Govt. days.
4. No Peace of revenge.
5. The Socialist alternative to the mighty trusts and combines.
6. The harnessing of atomic energy.
7. The United Socialist States of Europe.
8. A Socialist Foreign Policy for Britain.
9. No Peace-time Conscription in Britain.
10. Workers' Control of Industry.

There you are, comrade. Did you read anything about these 10 points? Are they platitudinous? As a matter of fact *The Socialist Leader* has voiced the thoughts of the best of the British Labour Movement and what we have said to-day will be actuality tomorrow.

There is, of course, one principle which we have held since 1900 and which you may call a platitude. This is our unswerving advocacy of a Socialism which is at once international, libertarian and democratic.

You don't like our "make-up"! Sorry about this. There's no accounting for tastes. Now, I like your make-up. The only thing which worries me is the heading "The *Intelligence* Office" from which emanated your remarks.

LONDON, ENGLAND JOHN MCNAIR,
General Secretary, Independent Labour Party

Yes, they are platitudes, except for Nos. 2 and 3 which are just vague. I might or might not agree that the other points are worth achieving, but first you would have to put them in more precise and meaningful form—these threadbare slogans no longer arouse either emotional response or intellectual interest. As for your paper's make-up, it has the following defects: (1) type too small; (2) heads much too big and "horsey," to use an American printer's term; (3) general effect of page is cluttered and messy-looking, with as many nooks, crannies and typographical whatnots as The Old Curiosity Shop; (4) the editors evidently are determined to get Everything in, as if they were packing a vacation suitcase—they would do better to cut and edit more carefully, to use fewer items and give them a chance to breathe.—ED.

A Letter the "Times" Would Not Print

To the Editor of "The New York Times":

In commenting editorially on Mr. Stimson's article, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb," you accept as "grim but irrefutable" his conclusion that the bomb was justified because it "would cost at least a million American—and many more Japanese casualties . . . to beat them to their knees."

It can probably be accepted as a fact that the bomb was responsible for the specific surrender of the Japanese on August 14. This, however, does not prove that the Japanese would not have surrendered without it. It is notable that the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey's "Summary Report—Pacific War" states and documents the contrary conclusion. The Report (page 26) states:

"Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts, and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to December 31, 1945, and in all probability prior to November 1, 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."

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Medical Aid Section
INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE
303 Fourth Avenue, Suite 516, New York 10, N. Y.

Since this Report is based on investigations in Japan, following the Occupation, it might be argued that those who were making policy decisions in July 1945 could not have known then how close Japan was to complete collapse. It is not easy, however,—in view of the evidence that has been published since the Occupation—to understand how it can still be maintained that the Japanese would not have surrendered without the atom bomb.

NEW YORK CITY HELEN MEARS

The Scientific Mind (Cont'd.)

Sir:

Some information on the scientific mind which I think may be interesting to you appeared in the first issue of *The Pacific Spectator*, a west coast university quarterly published at Stanford. "Prelude to Bikini" is the diary of Dr. Hugh Hildreth Skilling, a scientific-observer aboard the *Panamint*, the ship provided for scientists of many nations.

His account indicates how fortunate we feeling, valuing creatures are in being tolerated at all by these wonderful creators of the juke box and the atom bomb.

"*Tuesday, July 2.* I must write at once a little story that I have just heard. It has cheered the whole day. In fact, it has cheered the whole trip. Last week at Kwajalein quite a number of new passengers joined the ship. These were Army Air Force officers, about thirty in number; United States Senators, two; and Congressmen, fourteen. Later that day, after we had sailed, one of our United Nations group from Holland, and Doctor of Physics at Leyden University, was wandering disconsolately around the ship, looking at the new people. He met one of the American scientific-observer group. 'You know,' he said, 'this was a very, very pleasant trip—till all these damn foreigners came aboard.'

"So now all of us who are on the scientific side are going about telling each other this story, and it makes us very happy. This is mainly because it sort of expresses the feeling we all have. The American to whom the remark was first made is connected with publishing, and he is using the remark as the basis of an editorial on the international community of science.

"This morning a meeting was called of the scientific observers (that includes me) for each to tell in half a minute what he saw at the time of the explosion yesterday. This was a very good idea, for naturally each one saw it a little differently, yet on all essential points there was agreement. There was agreement, that is, as long as it was the scientists talking. But some others wandered into the meeting, even newsmen, and they were all invited to speak (this was a mistake) and the less their scientific training and experience, the more their ideas diverged. The newsmen, for instance, instead of sticking to the point, talked about how they were disappointed—or something—a matter in which no one was in the least interested, thereby showing the effect of *their* training. Not a single one of the scientists allowed any trace of personal feeling to enter his account—and I must say this for the scientists I don't like, as well as for those I like. The scientists disagreed, certainly, and it would have been clearly dishonest if they had not. But everyone knew that everyone else was describing as well as he could exactly what he remembered, and what one liked or disliked had absolutely nothing to do with the matter."

GRIDLEY, CALIF. GLENN PRICE

SEVENTH REPORT ON PACKAGES

THIS is a more cheerful report than our last in November. The good responses at Christmas time meant a CARE package for every German family on our lists. This month all of our Austrian families received a CARE package. But we still have many anti-fascist families to be helped: 31 in Austria, 67 in Germany, 8 in Greece, 9 in Italy and 35 Spanish Civil War refugees in France. (Our names come from trusted friends of the magazine here and abroad.)

From the excerpts below you can see what "adopting" a European family can mean in personal terms, both to you and to them:

From a Spanish refugee (Perpignan, France): "During the past year the C's and H's have provided us with the extra food and clothing we needed so badly. It is impossible to tell you how much gratitude and love we feel for these 2 families with whom we are in constant communication."

From Mrs. B. (Taft, Calif.): "I have been sending regularly to the U's for the past year. Their baby (10 months) has a bad case of eczema. My son-in-law, a doctor, is sending medicines and vitamin pills."

From Mr. A. (Stockton, Utah): "You need not worry about the A's. My niece and her friends have taken to them in a big way. Twelve girls participate and they want another name for consideration. I've ordered a raft of stuff for Paul B. from Sears Roebuck and also shoes for my god-daughter, Rosita."

BE "CONSTRUCTIVE"—HELP A EUROPEAN FAMILY

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POLITICS PAMPHLET No. 1:

THE ILIAD
or, The Poem of Force

by Simone Weil

(Translated by Mary McCarthy)

We continue to receive so many requests for this article—the issue containing it has long been exhausted—that we have decided to reprint it as the first of a series of Politics Pamphlets. Later pamphlets will include new material as well as reprints. Suggestions from our readers are invited.

Ready April 15 . . . Order now . . . 25c a single copy . . . 15c a copy in lots of 10 or more . . . Address Politics, 45 Astor Place, New York 3, N.Y.

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We want to thank our readers for taking so much trouble filling out the questionnaire. The response was much bigger than we had expected: more than half the questionnaires were returned. The comments and criticisms are of the greatest value to us. A friend of the magazine who is skilled in the statistical analysis of questionnaires will interpret the returns —we hope in time for the next issue.

The next issue (May-June) will contain, beside "Henry Wallace, Part 2", Walter Padley's "The USSR, Empire or Free Union?"; Nicola Chiaromonte's "Remarks on Justice"; George Orwell's "Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool"; and Jack Jones' "The Strange Dreams of Dr. Fell". The special issue devoted to French Political Writing will be the July-August issue.

The four-page reprint of selections from "The German Catastrophe" is still available. A first printing of 5,000 copies was quickly exhausted; of the second printing—10,000 copies —about 4,000 are left. Readers who can use bundles may get them by writing to Nancy Macdonald. They are free in lots up to 200; larger orders are charged for at the rate they cost us: $11 per 1,000.

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE: *Ethel Goldwater*, whose "The Independent Woman—a New Course" appeared in POLITICS last May, is at work on a book-length treatment of the theme . . . *Paul Mattick*, a German Marxist living in this country, was editor of "Living Marxism", which expressed the views of the Council Communist group . . . *George Woodcock* is our regular English correspondent. His biography of William Godwin was published this winter by the Porcupine Press in London . . . *Norman Matson*, who lives in New York City, has written for "The Saturday Evening Post", "Commonweal", "The New Yorker" and other magazines. He is the author of several novels, including "Day of Fortune". "The Animoid Idea" is a chapter from a book-length study of the cult of progress on which he is now working . . . *Paul Goodman's* new novel, "The State of Nature", was recently published by Vanguard, as was his study of Franz Kafka . . . *George Barbarow*, discharged last fall from a C.P.S. camp, lives in New York City. He works in a machine shop . . . *Helen Mears* wrote "Year of the Wild Boar", an account of the year 1935-6 which she spent in Japan; the winner of a Houghton Mifflin fellowship, she is working on a book about American policy in Japan . . . *Joseph Weizenbaum* is a student at Wayne University in Detroit; his interests are mathematics and psychology . . . *Helen Constas*, whose "A Critique of Marxian Ideology" appeared in POLITICS for January, 1946, is a graduate student at the New School in New York City . . . *Richard Chase*, who writes for "Partisan Review" and other magazines, teaches English at Connecticut College.

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Sincerely, Nancy Macdonald.

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